

ADOLFO DE LA HUERTA,  
THE FORGOTTEN MAN OF  
THE SONORA TRIUMVIRATE

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of History  
The University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Anna Mae Glese  
August 1966

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Three Sonorans, Álvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles, and Adolfo de la Huerta, led a successful rebellion in 1920 that pivoted the Mexican Revolution from the inactive conservatism of Venustiano Carranza to the active phase which gave meaning to the words of the Constitution of 1917. As a result this "Sonora Triumvirate" gained ascendancy in the national government, and each became president of Mexico. The first to become president, Adolfo de la Huerta, had been an active revolutionary since 1908, and had served in Carranza's government and as governor and senator for Sonora. Upon the success of the rebellion the national Congress elected him interim President to fulfill Carranza's term. During his interim, De la Huerta, using his gift for conciliation, returned Mexico to relative peace with little additional violence. In peaceful elections, Mexico chose Obregón to be the next president, and De la Huerta served him as finance minister. As such he negotiated Mexico's first post-revolutionary agreement for the payment of her national debt, the advantageous Lamont-De la Huerta agreement. To this success may be attributed the first rift in the Triumvirate; a rift arising from the jealousy created by his success.

In late 1923 the Triumvirate divide irreconcilably after a series of disagreements on policy and Obregón's designation of Calles as his successor. The final blow came from the elections in San Luis Potosí state where Obregón acted to insure that Calles would control the state in the presidential

elections. De la Huerta, under pressure from Obregón, resigned from the Finance Ministry. Continued pressure forced him to become a candidate for the presidency, and threw him into a rebellion together with a combination of conservative politicians and dissatisfied military chiefs. The rebellion, which he headed in name only, lacked cohesion and coordination since each leader was seeking dominance for himself. Prompt United States aid, Obregón's military abilities, and the internal dissension of the rebels defeated the last serious rebellion to face the Mexican government. De la Huerta, disillusioned, went into exile in the United States.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1920 three natives of the northwestern Mexican state of Sonora, Adolfo de la Huerta, Plutarco Elías Calles, and Álvaro Obregón, led a rebellion that deposed the corrupt and decaying regime of President Venustiano Carranza. Those three men, the Sonora Triumvirate, became in turn, presidents of Mexico. Under their leadership Mexico began to implement the social concepts embodied in the Constitution of 1917.

Adolfo de la Huerta, the least known of the Triumvirate, acted as interim President for six months, from June 1, 1920, until November 30, 1920. The few historians who treat of his brief presidency usually define his term unjustly and without comprehension with the accusative statement, "acting with Obregón's approval."

As the first of the Sonora Triumvirate to serve in the presidency, De la Huerta helped return Mexico to peace, a necessary prelude to the successful fulfillment of Obregón's plans for the nation. As Finance Minister under Obregón, De la Huerta negotiated the first post-revolutionary agreement for the payment of Mexico's foreign debt. And as an enemy of his onetime Sonora friends, De la Huerta was titular head of a rebellion that threatened to unseat Obregón, the last important revolt in Mexico.

Much has been written of the role of the two dominant figures of the Triumvirate, Obregón and Calles, but little

on the role of Adolfo de la Huerta, the third member. The rebellion bearing his name relegated him to a literature so involved in recriminations and prejudices that the facts and truth are difficult to ascertain. To complicate the role of one trying to assemble facts, the contemporary writers forgot that the occasional inclusion of a date is necessary to place an occurrence in its historical context.

The author does not pretend that this is a completely comprehensive study of Adolfo de la Huerta, nor does she pretend to have examined all materials related to her subject. Only a portion of those available in the United States were used, and for the majority of those, the author must thank the University of Texas Latin American library.

Because the early career of De la Huerta was so intertwined in the political and personal intricacies of the Mexican Revolution, the author has deemed it necessary to include a brief resume of the early years of that Revolution to establish De la Huerta's relationship to national events.

In the twenty-fourth year of the Porfirian dictatorship, James Creelman, an American journalist, published a eulogistic article in Pearson's Magazine, entitled, "Porfirio Diaz, Hero of the Americas." Creelman based his article on

a personal interview. In the course of the conversation Díaz declared that the purpose of his government was to prepare Mexico for democracy; that he would welcome, protect, and guide an opposition party, should one appear. Whatever the intent of those statements which still puzzle historians, the article had immediate repercussions in Mexico where it was reprinted, read, and discussed. Díaz did not realize that his interview had opened a door marked "Revolution."

Many Mexicans believed that Díaz was sincere. Long repressed political activity increased and opposition coalesced into united groups, the most important of which was the Anti-Reelectionist Party of Francisco I. Madero. Mexico learned in 1910 that conditions had not truly changed, but Madero, convinced that the Díaz hold on the country had weakened, became a presidential candidate.

Díaz planned an extravagant celebration for 1910, the centennial year of the Mexican Independence movement. He did not appear worried by his small opponent from Coahuila, but as the populace responded more and more to Madero, official harrassment began. A month before the general elections of July, 1910, he was arrested on a specious charge. Madero remained in custody at San Luis Potosí until early October, when, with the festivities past, Díaz permitted him to escape to exile in the United States. Díaz then announced the election results. He had received his usual mandate from the people; Madero received 196 votes.

From San Antonio, Texas, Madero issued his Plan of San Luis Potosí, calling on Mexicans to revolt. In November scattered small rebellions flared, but the general uprising Madero hoped for did not occur. Madero would not accept that failure as defeat. Then slowly the tiny spark of Madero's faith flamed into a revolution.

In Chihuahua, Pascual Orozco, Jr., the storekeeper rebel, won in several small encounters with federal troops. Francisco "Pancho" Villa, the bandit turned revolutionary, and Venustiano Carranza, who had represented Coahuila in the Díaz Senate, also gathered fighting forces. Madero returned to Mexico to assume personal leadership; by April, 1911, much of the country was in rebellion. The Mexican army, led by aging generals, proved to be largely a paper army weakened by graft and corruption. Negotiations between Madero and Díaz were conducted during April and early May with no agreement until the rebels captured Ciudad Juárez. Madero could then dictate terms; he demanded the resignation of Díaz and his cabinet, and the appointment of an interim president who would hold a general election. Madero became president of Mexico on November 6, 1911.

Madero's tenure as president was too short to satisfy all the demands of the Revolution, even if he had known and understood them. Much of his time and the country's resources were wasted in suppressing rebellions by his recent supporters or the supporters of the ousted dictator. In



Morelos, Emiliano Zapata rebelled as he had against Díaz, demanding land for his people. General Bernardo Reyes, former porfirista governor of Nuevo León, attempted an uprising only to land in prison in Mexico City. Pascual Orozco, Jr., revolted in March, 1912. His campaign promised to be successful until Madero appointed Victoriano Huerta, a porfirista general with a blemished reputation, to command the government forces. By mid-August Huerta had reduced the orozquistas to scattered guerilla bands. Then Félix Díaz, the nephew of Porfirio, presented a new threat when he seized Veracruz in October. The federal army easily retook the city and a military court sentenced Díaz to death. The Supreme Court commuted the sentence and Díaz went to prison in Mexico City.

With Reyes and Díaz both in Mexico City, the stage was set for the tragedy that followed. Conservatives seeking the overthrow of Madero chose Reyes and Díaz to lead the movement. On the morning of February 9, 1913, Generals Reyes and Díaz, freed from prison, assaulted the National Palace. Reyes was killed immediately by loyal elements in the Palace. After a short exchange of shots, the assailants withdrew to the Cuadela. When Madero arrived at the National Palace he had to name a replacement for the commander, who had been wounded. Madero selected General Huerta to be the new commander, not knowing that the General had joined the conspiracy.

There followed ten bloody days as General Huerta and

the defenders of the Ciudadela staged a sanguinary hoax, designed successfully to bring Madero to his knees. Madero and the Vice-President, José María Pino Suarez, were captured and persuaded to resign. Victoriano Huerta then became president. On the night of February 22, 1913, Madero and Pino Suarez were assassinated.<sup>1</sup>

The coup succeeded in Mexico City, but some states refused to accept the usurpation. The governor of Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza, disavowed Huerta as Chief Executive on February 19, and invited other states to join him. There was little response. Only Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sonora, Durango, Zacatecas, and Nuevo León joined Carranza to revenge the martyred President, but from these states came the men who would install the Revolution in the National Palace.<sup>2</sup>

Carranza proclaimed his Plan of Guadalupe naming himself First Chief of the Constitutionalist Army on March 26, 1913. Then in April, delegates from Sonora, Chihuahua, and Coahuila met in Monclova, Coahuila, to agree on a plan for political and military unity in conformity with the Plan of Guadalupe.

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<sup>1</sup> Roberto Blanco Moheno, Crónica de la Revolución Mexicana (Mexico, D. F., 1959); Charles Curtis Cumberland, Mexican Revolution, Genesis under Madero (Austin, Texas, 1952); Herbert Ingram Priestley, The Mexican Nation, a History (New York, 1930); Stanley R. Ross, Francisco I. Madero, Apostle of Mexican Democracy (New York, 1955); Alfonso Taracena, La Verdadera Revolución Mexicana, Primera etapa, 1901-1913 (Mexico, D. F., 1960).

<sup>2</sup> Isidro Fabela, Documentos Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana (4 vols., Mexico, D. F., 1960), IV, 50.

The Act of the Convention of Monclova officially accepted Carranza as First Chief and declared that he would be the interim president upon the occupation of Mexico City by the Constitutionalist forces.<sup>3</sup>

The huertista threat in Coahuila forced Carranza to take refuge in Hermosillo, Sonora, where he formed his first government. He also designated military commanders for the Constitutionalist forces: General Álvaro Obregón, who had gained repute against the orozquistas, was named Chief of the Army of the Northwest; General Francisco Villa was named Chief of the Army of the North, and General Pablo González had the same position with the Army of the Northeast.

Álvaro Obregón's army entered Mexico City in July, 1914. Dissension quickly developed in the Constitutionalist ranks between the followers of Carranza and the villistas, who were aligned with the zapatistas. Carranza evacuated the capital for Veracruz.

From December, 1914, until July, 1915, no central government existed in Mexico, but rather two revolutionary forces contending for control. In those eight months, control of Mexico City alternated between the zapatistas, the villistas, and the carrancistas, until General Obregón removed Villa from the contest for the capital with a decisive defeat at Celaya. Villa fell back to the north, with Obregón in pursuit.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

Defeats at Agua Prieta and Hermosillo, Sonora, destroyed Villa as an effective force.

In Veracruz, Carranza issued social reform decrees in an effort to gain wider support. These decrees defined for the first time the objectives of the Revolution. Beginning with the Additions to the Plan of Guadalupe in December, 1914, the laws promised social, economic, and political improvements. They included land and labor legislation, the revision of mining and petroleum laws, and the pledge to destroy monopolies created under Díaz.<sup>4</sup>

While Obregón pressed Villa in the north, General Salvador Alvarado, another of the men of the North, pushed the zapatistas back in the area around the capital. The carrancistas entered the capital to stay on August 14, 1915.

Pancho Villa continued to create trouble for Mexico. The murder of United States citizens at San Isabel, Chihuahua, and Columbus, New Mexico, by his followers caused the United States to demand the right to pursuit. Carranza reluctantly agreed to the entry of United States troops, but the presence of those troops embarrassed both him and Woodrow Wilson. The United States mission proved fruitless, and Wilson withdrew at the first possibility of a settlement. Wilson desired only a safe border, with good reason, for as the troops left Mexico, in February, 1917, he was weighing the question of

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<sup>4</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, Peace by Revolution (New York, 1933), 161-163, 201-203.

United States entry into World War I.

The withdrawal of the soldiers did little to ease tensions between the two countries. The interception of the notorious Zimmerman telegram revealed that Mexico could be a source of danger to the United States, and Carranza's decision to remain neutral did not remove that threat. Moreover, a new Mexican constitution was promulgated in February, 1917, which contained articles that menaced the property of United States citizens in Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

The Constitutional Convention that had assembled in Querétaro on December 1, 1916, quickly divided into two factions; the radicals, indirectly representing Obregón, and the liberals, representing Carranza. The radicals gained control of the convention and the resulting document reflected the thinking of soldiers who advocated the socialization of property. Obregón's influence made possible the inclusion of controversial Articles 3, 27, 123, and 130.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For additional information on this chaotic period in Mexican history see: Samuel Flagg Bemis, The Latin American Policy of the United States (New York, 1943); Clarence C. Clendenen, The United States and Pancho Villa (Ithaca, New York, 1961); Nellie Campobello, Apuntes sobre la vida militar de Francisco Villa (Mexico, D. F., 1940); Carlo de Fornaro, Carranza and Mexico (New York, 1915); Chester Lloyd Jones, Mexico and its Reconstruction (New York, 1921); Leone B. Moats, Thunder in their Veins (New York, 1932); Edgcumb Pinchon, Zapata the Unconquerable (New York, 1941); Robert E. Quirk, The Mexican Revolution, 1914-1915 (Bloomington, Indiana, 1960); J. Fred Rippey, The United States and Mexico (New York, 1931); Barbara W. Tuchman, The Zimmerman Telegram (New York, 1963).

<sup>6</sup> Tannenbaum, Peace by Revolution, 165-167.

Article 3 provided for free, secular instruction for children, and prohibited the establishment of primary schools by any religious order. Article 27 dealt with ownership of property; it nationalized all church property, forbade foreign ownership of properties in certain areas, and nationalized the ownership of subsoil deposits, including petroleum. Article 123, often called the "Magna Carta" of labor, contained a complete definition of the rights and privileges of Mexican labor. Article 130 limited the civil rights of priests and banned foreign clergymen.

Carranza became Constitutional President in March, 1917. Although he accepted the new Constitution, he made no effort to fulfill its utopian promises. The man who joined Madero to depose a dictator became himself a dictator. In 1919 and 1920 the state of Sonora backed Alvaro Obregón for president against Carranza's choice and the President acted to assure control of the state. His efforts involved the nation in internal strife, but once it was past Mexico had become a land in Revolution.

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## CHAPTER I

### PRELUDE TO THE PRESIDENCY

Adolfo de la Huerta had been one of the many young men in Mexico who had hoped that Díaz meant what he said in the Creelman interview. In 1908, he was twenty-seven years old, the older son of Torcuato and Carmen Marcor de la Huerta of Guaymas. Adolfo had attended primary school in Guaymas, secondary school in Hermosillo, and in 1896 had gone to the National Preparatory School in Mexico City to continue his studies. In 1900 on the death of his father, Adolfo returned to Guaymas to support the family. He worked successively as a bookkeeper, as auditor in the Guaymas branch of the National Bank of Mexico, and as a manager of a local tannery. When Francisco Madero accepted the invitation of the Creelman interview, De la Huerta resigned from the tannery to act as an agent for the Anti-Reelectionist Clubs, traveling extensively in the northern interior to establish contact with similar groups.<sup>1</sup>

The Anti-Reelectionists in the state of Sonora proved especially responsive to Madero's call for a revolt. Sonora was the home state of Ramón Corral, the Vice-President of Mexico and one of the most hated men in the country; consequently, the persecution of Madero had been particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Eduardo W. Villa, Galería de Sonorenses ilustres (Hermosillo, Sonora, 1948), 85-86.



severe in that state during his tour of 1910. The persecution limited the effectiveness of the campaign, but Madero met and enlisted two of the men who were to lead the Anti-Reelectionist movement in Sonora, José María Maytorena and Benjamín G. Hill.<sup>2</sup> De la Huerta joined the revolutionary junta formed by Maytorena in Guaymas.<sup>3</sup>

Plutarco Elías Calles, the treasurer of Guaymas, had expressed his sympathy for the revolutionary cause, but the Anti-Reelectionists distrusted him because he held his post through the influence of a porfirista. De la Huerta, however, had known Calles since the 1890's, and believed him sincere. Calles was accepted, but later refused to join the Madero movement for fear of hurting the friend who had gotten him his appointment.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley R. Ross, Francisco I. Madero, Apostle of Mexican Democracy (New York, 1955), 89-90; Alfonso Taracena, La Verdadera Revolución Mexicana, Primera etapa, 1901-1913 (Mexico, D. F., 1960), 89.

<sup>3</sup> Adolfo de la Huerta, Memorias de don Adolfo de la Huerta. Transcrito y comentarios por Roberto Guzmán Esparza (Mexico, D. F., 1957), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 16-18. De la Huerta attended the Colegio de Sonora in Hermosillo where Calles helped in the primary school, and met Calles because both were from Guaymas. Calles returned to Guaymas, where Alfonso, De la Huerta's younger brother, was one of his students. De la Huerta and Calles renewed their acquaintance in 1900 when the former returned to Guaymas. Through the influence of a friend in the state government, Calles was named municipal president of Frontera, but remained in that post only a short time. The same friend secured his appointment as treasurer of Guaymas. Calles' reputation in the state was unsavory, but appeared to be largely the result of his repeated association with men accused of dishonesty.

Government persecution prior to the election in 1910 forced the junta to move to Nogales, Arizona. Maytorena then requested that De la Huerta join him. From Nogales, De la Huerta traveled as emissary to other opposition groups in Sonora, and was commissioned a colonel, but never exercised military command.

The De la Huerta family had maintained excellent relations with the Yaqui Indians since the time of Adolfo's grandfather, who had lived with the tribe. De la Huerta suggested to the junta that the Indians might be of help in the struggle against the Díaz elements in Sonora. The junta agreed, and through his friend, the tribal governor, De la Huerta secured eight hundred men. However, Madero signed the armistice with Díaz before the force was used in battle.

Madero named a provisional government headed by Eugenio H. Gayou to replace the Díaz administration in Sonora.<sup>5</sup> De la Huerta cooperated with the provisional governor in receiving the surrender of the federal troops in the state, in the arming and licensing of revolutionary contingents, and in making a settlement with the Yaquis.<sup>6</sup>

Because of his participation in the Madero movement, De la Huerta became a political force and was elected president of the state's revolutionary party that supported Maytorena

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8-14; Villa, Galería, 86.

<sup>6</sup> Villa, Galería, 86.

for governor and Gayou for vice-governor. Another friend of De la Huerta was the party nominee for treasurer.

While De la Huerta campaigned in behalf of the party candidates, he was nominated to candidacy for a seat as deputy to the state Chamber for the Guaymas district. Calles was a candidate for the same seat and successfully sought Maytorena's support, suggesting that De la Huerta be given some other post. Despite Maytorena's backing, Calles was not acceptable to the voters of Guaymas, who remembered his questionable connections. De la Huerta knew of Calles' aspirations and encouraged them, but Calles recognized that the fight was hopeless. The elections proved him to be right; De la Huerta carried the election overwhelmingly.<sup>7</sup> The friendship between the two men suffered no apparent injury as a result of the election competition.

After he took his seat in the Twenty-Third State Legislature, De la Huerta was in a position to further the political careers of Calles and another fledgling politician, Álvaro Obregón. These men were to become military heroes and presidents of Mexico, ultimately overshadowing De la Huerta; but in 1911 Calles had a bad business reputation, and Obregón was a political unknown. Obregón had not supported the Madero movement; in fact, he was reputed to have been

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<sup>7</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 21-24.

a partisan of Ramón Corral, the Vice-President under Díaz.<sup>8</sup> The political association and friendship which became the Sonora Triumvirate in the early 1920's had its inception in state politics in the Madero era.

Calles pleaded with De la Huerta to secure his appointment as police commissioner of the small town of Agua Prieta. De la Huerta tried to persuade him to choose something better, but Calles thought that the town would develop quickly. Vice-Governor Gayou opposed the appointment. He declared that the commissioner should be an energetic and able man to suppress the banditry common to the frontier area, and Calles had not evidenced himself to be such. De la Huerta convinced Gayou that Calles could handle the post, and Calles received the desired appointment.<sup>9</sup>

De la Huerta met Obregón shortly after Madero's triumph. Obregón had sought his first political employment as municipal president of the Sonora town of Huatabampo where his family had been members of the town council. He apparently won the office with the support of his friends, the Mayo Indians, but their votes were thrown out because all the illiterate Indians' ballots were written in a suspiciously

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 27; Villa, Galería, 122. Villa states that Obregón was considered a científico, one of the inner circle under Díaz.

<sup>9</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 24-26; Villa, Galería, 52, 86. Villa confirms that De la Huerta used his influence to obtain the position for Calles.

identical hand. Obregón appealed to De la Huerta, not the deputies from his own district, and an investigation convinced De la Huerta that Obregón had won an honest victory. He supported him in the dispute in Congress, which then proclaimed Obregón to be the winning candidate.<sup>10</sup>

When Pascual Orozco rebelled in northern Mexico in 1912, President Madero ordered the municipal governments to raise forces to battle the rebels. Obregón raised 300 men and went to Hermosillo. The businessmen there convinced Gayou that the reputedly conservative Obregón should remain in that city for their protection; but he preferred to go to Chihuahua to fight the orozquistas. Obregón asked De la Huerta to intercede with Gayou so that he could join the fighting forces where he could gain rank. De la Huerta did so, and Obregón marched off to begin an illustrious military career.<sup>11</sup>

After the defeat of the orozquistas and the aborted attempt at rebellion by Félix Díaz, Governor Maytorena, who was in Mexico City, asked De la Huerta to join his staff there as an adviser. Thus, De la Huerta was in Mexico City at the onset of the tragedy that led to the fall of Madero. De la Huerta was the first civilian to present himself at Chapultepec Palace for orders that tragic morning. During the ten days that followed, he and his fellow Sonoran,

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<sup>10</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 27-28.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 30-32.

Roberto V. Pesqueira, cooperated with Madero to try to terminate the bloody farce which the opposition was carefully staging.<sup>12</sup> When Madero resigned, De la Huerta and Pesqueira quickly left for northern Mexico to seek the support of the governors against the usurper, Victoriano Huerta. The governors of Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, and Nuevo León would not commit themselves. But in Coahuila, De la Huerta and Pesqueira learned that the governor of that state, Venustiano Carranza, had issued a manifesto against the usurpation. Upon arrival in Monclova on February 21, 1913, they communicated with Carranza and promised Sonoran cooperation.

Carranza commissioned Pesqueira to go to Eagle Pass, Texas, to assist the consul there. De la Huerta was to return to Sonora to determine the position of Governor Maytorena.<sup>13</sup> Carranza told them that if Maytorena would not assume command of the movement in Sonora, they should take command.<sup>14</sup> De la Huerta assured Carranza that no matter which way Maytorena leaned, Sonora would provide 20,000 men to support his movement.<sup>15</sup> Upon conclusion of the conference with Carranza, the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 44; Villa, Galería, 86.

<sup>13</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 50-51; Villa, Galería, 87; Isidro Fabela, ed., Documentos Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana (4 vols., Mexico, D. F., 1960), IV, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Fabela, Documentos Históricos, IV, 33.

<sup>15</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 52.

two men continued their journey to Eagle Pass; en route to Sonora, De la Huerta learned of the death of Madero.

Sonora, at the urging of Obregón, Calles, and Manuel M. Diéguez, municipal president of the town of Cananea, prepared to revolt. When De la Huerta arrived in Hermosillo, he found that Governor Maytorena had left for Tucson, Arizona. The Governor, unable to decide which path to follow after the death of Madero, had asked for a leave of absence. De la Huerta followed him to Tucson to persuade him to return, but Maytorena was ill and unwilling to do so.<sup>16</sup> The substitute governor, Ignacio L. Pesqueira, and the state Congress vowed to follow Carranza.<sup>17</sup>

De la Huerta's early participation in the Constitutionalist movement earned him more political rewards and a role in national politics. After Carranza issued his Plan of Guadalupe, De la Huerta and Roberto V. Pesqueira were the Sonoran delegates to the Convention of Monclova which accepted the Plan for Sonora, Coahuila, and Chihuahua.<sup>18</sup> When the huertista threat caused Carranza to seek safety in Hermosillo, Obregón, Colonel Benjamín Hill, and De la Huerta were in the welcoming committee that escorted him from Sinaloa to Hermosillo.<sup>19</sup> In the first Carranza government, formed in

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<sup>16</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 55.

<sup>17</sup> Taracena, Segunda etapa, 1913-1914, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Fabela, Documentos Históricos, 66-67

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 85

Hermosillo, De la Huerta was named Chief Clerk of the Ministry of Government, a position of national importance.<sup>20</sup> He served as Chief Clerk from September, 1913, until April, 1916, when Carranza designated him governor of Sonora to serve until August 31, 1917.<sup>21</sup>

As interim governor of his home state, De la Huerta initiated some of Mexico's most advanced social legislation. Those laws had a basis in the decrees issued by Carranza from Veracruz in 1914 and 1915, which also were the basis for the Constitution of 1917. Through personal correspondence, De la Huerta was familiar with the programs advocated by most of Mexico's social reformers.<sup>22</sup> His legislation reflected the dawning awareness of political leaders of the advantages of securing labor support. De la Huerta's labor decrees incorporated most of the basic standards acceptable to labor leaders in Europe and America at that time. Decree Number 71, issued October 10, 1916, proclaimed the creation of a Worker's Chamber for the state to study the problems related to the working classes. To form the Chamber, a

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<sup>20</sup> Miguel Alessio Robles, História Política de la Revolución (Mexico, D. F., 1938), 95. The Ministry of Government has no equivalent in the United States. It controls the administration of the Federal District and any territories, is charged with handling sanitation, federal elections, controls immigration, public charities, the national printing office, and the daily official bulletin (Diario Oficial).

<sup>21</sup> Taracena, Cuarta etapa, 1915, 98.

<sup>22</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 11.



representative was to be elected for each thousand workers. The decree also framed the criteria for labor legislation; an eight-hour day and a six-day week, standards for age and wage laws, and on-the-job accident indemnification.<sup>23</sup> To implement this decree, De la Huerta published Decree Number 92 in March, 1917,<sup>24</sup> and Decree Number 97, July, 1917, establishing the above criteria as law and adding several beneficial standards.<sup>25</sup>

De la Huerta also found an opportunity to reward his Yaqui friends by restoring lands formerly owned by the Indians, as decreed in Carranza's Agrarian Law issued from Veracruz, January 6, 1915. The terms were communicated to the president who approved them completely. Also, in conformity with the Agrarian Laws, De la Huerta established agricultural cooperatives.<sup>26</sup>

During his term as governor, De la Huerta distributed 175,000 acres of land among the farmers, established three textile factories to give work to widows of revolutionaries, installed workshops and schools in the state penitentiary,<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 95-98, Text of Decree Number 71.

<sup>24</sup> Rafael Trujillo, Adolfo de la Huerta y los Tratados de Bucareli (Mexico, D. F., 1957), 60 Footnote.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., De la Huerta, Memorias, 98. Decree Number 97 contained an indemnification law which was repealed under Calles, who considered it too radical. Lauren Calvo Berber, Nociones de Historia de Sonora (Mexico, D. F., 1958), 298.

<sup>26</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 76; Villa, Galería, 87.

<sup>27</sup> Trujillo, Los Tratados, 60.

and built 213 schools.<sup>28</sup> But he seemed to take greatest pride in his contributions to the writing of the Constitution of 1917.

De la Huerta claimed credit for the profit-sharing provisions of Article 123. He had appointed Froylán C. Manjarrez, Juan de Dios Bojórquez, and Flavio A. Bórquez as delegates to the constitutional convention and asked that they submit a proposition which would give the workers in various industries the right to participate.<sup>29</sup> Bojórquez was one of the secretaries of the convention, and a member of the radical faction that carried the debates and the votes which made possible the inclusion of Article 123.<sup>30</sup> The sixth and ninth paragraphs of that article established the principle that the workers should share the profits.<sup>31</sup>

Plutarco Elías Calles was elected governor of Sonora in 1917, and De la Huerta became a Senator in the National Congress. While De la Huerta served in that capacity, Carranza appointed him provisional governor of Yucatán, but as he was not a native of that state, De la Huerta did not elect to serve. Carranza then authorized him to choose a man who would guarantee impartiality in the next Yucatecan

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<sup>28</sup> Calvo Berber, Nociones, 299.

<sup>29</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 98.

<sup>30</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, Peace by Revolution (New York, 1944), 165-167.

<sup>31</sup> Leonardo Pasquel, Las Constituciones de América, II, (Mexico, D. F., 1943), 61.

elections. After making his selection, he returned to the capital, and Carranza commissioned him to make a study of political conditions in the country.<sup>32</sup> Then in November, 1917, Carranza suggested to De la Huerta that he go on a secret mission to Washington, D. C., to aid Ambassador Ignacio Bonillas with problems relating to Mexican neutrality. De la Huerta assented after obtaining the President's promise that Mexico would remain neutral. In a series of conferences, Carranza instructed him on the limits of Mexican cooperation in supplying the United States with vital products and raw materials. Before departure, however, the United States ejected the Mexican consul in New York for giving Mexican passports to Germans and Austrians, and De la Huerta was named to that post.<sup>33</sup>

De la Huerta was still consul when he was chosen as candidate for governor of Sonora by the Sonora Revolutionary Party. When he refused to return to Mexico to campaign without Carranza's authorization, the Sonora senate asked the President to give his permission. Carranza assented readily, asking only that De la Huerta come to Mexico City to report on his mission before returning to the state.

De la Huerta returned to the capital in December, 1918.

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<sup>32</sup> Villa, Galería, 87.

<sup>33</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 102-105.

After his talks with Carranza, he requested permission to leave for Sonora, but the President declined, asserting that he needed him in Mexico City to take charge of the Ministry of Government. De la Huerta refused the offer because he had promised to be a candidate in Sonora. Carranza delayed him on one pretext or another throughout the following January, until it seemed evident that the President would try to detain him until after the elections which were scheduled for April. In early February De la Huerta decided to leave without advising Carranza.

The explanation for Carranza's actions lay in the impending presidential elections. Most Mexicans knew that Generals Obregón and Pablo González would be candidates for the presidency. The nation also knew that Carranza was unalterably opposed to the military in politics and neither candidate could expect his support. Sonora, as Obregón's home state, would assuredly support him in the presidential race unless Carranza controlled the state government. In that case the state would sustain his candidate for the presidency. The President, aware of the friendship between De la Huerta and Obregón, knew De la Huerta's support would go to the General.

De la Huerta faced three rival candidates for the governorship of Sonora. One of these had the backing of General Obregón, another was a military hero and a friend of Calles, and the third was a recognized carrancista who

campaigned on funds supplied by the federal government.<sup>34</sup>

De la Huerta conducted a vigorous campaign and in the election received more votes than all his rivals together.<sup>35</sup> He was inaugurated September 1, 1919.

In the interim between his election and his inauguration, De la Huerta continued to hold his position as Senator from Sonora to which he had been elected in 1917. Three of his fellow senators proposed to De la Huerta in late May, 1919, that he be a candidate for the presidency of Mexico. He reacted adversely, but found that word of the proposal had spread. The President, despite the deterioration of his relationship with De la Huerta, encouraged him, affirming that his candidacy would satisfy a Republic that longed for civilian government. De la Huerta rejected the suggestion.<sup>36</sup> It is probable that he had already committed himself to the support of Obregón, since the Sonora Revolutionary Party announced its endorsement of the General on May 31. In addition, he knew that presidential endorsement of a candidate precluded free elections.

Carranza's sincerity in encouraging De la Huerta's candidacy is not necessarily incredible, for he opposed

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 106-107, 137-138    <sup>35</sup> Villa, Galería, 87.

<sup>36</sup> Guzmán Esparza gives no exact reason why De la Huerta refused to be a candidate, but quotes him as saying, "Por ningún motivo me prestaría para una pantomima de esa naturaleza." De la Huerta, Memorias, 139.

militarism in Mexican politics. But it must be remembered that the old man was a past master at playing one faction against another, and seemed to desire another candidate from Sonora to oppose Obregón and divide the state. If trouble resulted, Don Venustiano could find opportunity to serve Mexico.

There can be no exact statement of the political and personal relationship between De la Huerta, Calles and Obregón during this period. The cooperation of Calles and De la Huerta in Obregón's campaign, in spite of differences arising from the gubernatorial campaign, hints at a political agreement which may or may not have had a formal basis. If such an agreement is assumed from circumstantial evidence, Obregón's private reactions to later events in Sonora restricts it to a pledge of support that did not encompass a comprehensive plan for a rebellion or any agreement on aims.

After De la Huerta won the election in Sonora, Carranza named Calles, who was still governor, as Minister of Commerce and Industry. Calles agreed to take the post so that he could observe presidential maneuverings relative to the campaign. From his vantage point in Mexico City, Calles reported to De la Huerta in October, 1919, that

from the moment I arrived in Querétaro, where I met the Chief, I received a strong and disagreeable impression that the Chief of State and all

the politicians that accompany the presidential train are entirely against all partisans of General Obregón.<sup>37</sup>

He further stated that persistent rumors in the capital indicated that Carranza would support Ignacio Bonillas, a Sonoran and the ambassador to the United States, for the presidency. But Carranza did not confirm these reports immediately.

He had tried to persuade De la Huerta to attend a secret meeting in Cuatro Ciénegas, Coahuila, possibly to discuss De la Huerta as a potential candidate. De la Huerta refused to attend, and shortly thereafter, Bonillas was confirmed as Carranza's choice.<sup>38</sup> In November, the states that Carranza dominated named Bonillas as their candidate, and in early January, the newly formed National Democratic Party formally nominated him. Carranza had his candidate from Sonora.

The President called a conference of governors for early February, 1920. The ostensible purpose of the meeting was to discuss means of guaranteeing liberty of suffrage in the upcoming elections. Obregón's followers intimated that its true purpose was to assist in the election of the administration candidate. Governor De la Huerta did not

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<sup>37</sup> Clodoveo Valenzuela and Amado Cháverri Matamoros, Sonora Y Carranza (Mexico, D. F. 1921), 72. Letter from Calles to De la Huerta, October 27, 1919.

<sup>38</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 139.

attend.<sup>39</sup> Carranza had indicated that he would like to have De la Huerta's support for Bonillas, but the Governor would only guarantee complete liberty of suffrage in Sonora and refused to try to influence the popular vote in any way.<sup>40</sup> Carranza expressed his displeasure with De la Huerta in his aggressive attitude toward the state of Sonora.

Shortly after De la Huerta took office, it became apparent that Carranza was seeking an excuse to intervene in Sonora, as he had done in other states. The President authorized him to conclude a permanent understanding with the Yaquis, who had fought a continuing battle against extermination and for possession of their lands since Díaz had opened their lands to settlement by outsiders. Accordingly, De la Huerta arranged a conference to reach an agreement.

General Juan José Ríos, chief of military operations in Sonora, represented Carranza at the conference. De la Huerta attended personally, anticipating treachery on the part of the government. The Governor, constantly plagued by Ríos' non-cooperation, guided the proceedings carefully. In spite of the hindrances from Ríos, De la Huerta arranged a most reasonable treaty by stipulating in detail the terms for the

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<sup>39</sup> Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1920 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1920) (3 vols., Washington, D. C., 1936), III, 131.

<sup>40</sup> Telegram from the Consul at Nogales to Secretary of State, February 9, 1920, FR: 1920, 130-131.



pacification of the Yaquis.

The central government did act perfidiously. Carranza retracted his authorization and refused to sanction the agreement. Moreover, he withdrew his military and material support, creating a very delicate situation in the state. Carranza's perverse actions indicated to the Sonorans that he intended to provoke trouble in the state which would give him an excuse to intervene in state affairs. De la Huerta and the Sonorans believed that he had deliberately insulted the Yaquis. The state attributed the prevention of a bloody uprising to De la Huerta's personal prestige among the chiefs.<sup>41</sup>

Carranza had angered the state during the Calles governorship when he decreed that the Sonora River was the property of the nation, basing his arguments on Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917. The state had fought the same battle against Díaz and won, but Carranza was more persistent. Calles' protests against the legality of the move were ignored, as were De la Huerta's. Carranza discounted all evidence which proved the river was not subject to control by the federal government, and nationalized the river in February, 1920.<sup>42</sup>

Carranza ordered General Manuel M. Diéguez, a man highly

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<sup>41</sup> Valenzuela, Sonora y Carranza, 59-60.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 24-43. Correspondence between De la Huerta and the central government relative to the Sonora River.

respected by the Sonorans for his defense of Hermosillo against the villistas in 1915, on an inspection tour of Sonora. The federal government realized that most of the garrisons of the state needed only an incident as an excuse for rebellion. Consequently, General Diéguez, the newest chief of military operations in the state, and General Francisco Murguía were ordered into Sonora with their troops, and the citizens averred that Diéguez also had orders to depose the constitutional government and substitute one friendly to Carranza.<sup>43</sup>

De la Huerta protested the arrival of the new forces since Sonora was peaceful and looking forward eagerly to the elections. To Carranza he stressed his fear that the presence of the troops of General Diéguez would cause unrest among the Yaquis.<sup>44</sup> Carranza denied the rumor that he sought to depose the government and ridiculed De la Huerta's fear of an Indian uprising.<sup>45</sup>

De la Huerta did not believe his fears to be without basis, for the Yaquis had communicated to him their distrust of General Diéguez. They had felt his hostility in 1915 when he concluded a peace with them. The Governor reminded

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<sup>43</sup> Jesus Romero Flores, Anales Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana (3 vols., Mexico, D. F., 1960), II, 116.

<sup>44</sup> Valenzuela, Sonora y Carranza, 154-155. Letter from De la Huerta to Carranza, March 30, 1920.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., Telegram from Carranza to De la Huerta, April 2, 1920.

Carranza that if the Yaquis withdrew to the Sierras because of distrust of Diéguez, they would become robbers, and the pursuing troops would be forced to renew the battle that had desolated the region before. He begged Carranza to stop the movement of the troops into Sonora with no effect.

Sonorans felt numerous other grievances attributable to federal actions and related to the political situation, which aroused suspicions about government intentions in the state. Carranza did not hide his plans. The official press of the central government openly stated in editorials that the President would be justified in sending troops into the state to depose the governor and to replace him with a man satisfactory to the government. Furthermore, the public knew of the orders given for control of the political campaign.<sup>46</sup>

A strike by Sonora employees of the Southern Pacific Railroad of Mexico idled all rail traffic in the state, and gave the President an excuse to send more troops into the area. The strike began on April 3, 1920, despite a federal court injunction that it be delayed. The government issued an ultimatum declaring that if the trains were not running in seventy-two hours, they would be seized and operated with soldiers. State political leaders warned that such action

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 159-161. Telegram from De la Huerta to Carranza, April 4, 1920.

would result in revolution.<sup>47</sup> De la Huerta forestalled federal action by taking over the railroads and running them with the strikers to whom he conceded all demands.<sup>48</sup>

All the foregoing incidents taken by themselves would have been minor irritants, but aggravated by the political situation relative to the forthcoming presidential elections, they furnished an excuse for rebellion.

The State Congress of Sonora, on April 6, protested the sending of troops to their state and warned that Carranza would be responsible for any trouble that arose from such action.<sup>49</sup> Three days later the legislators decided that Carranza had violated the Constitution by sending troops into Sonora without the request or consent of the state congress or the governor. A telegram to Carranza informed him that Sonora had broken relations with the federal government.<sup>50</sup>

In a resolution adopted at the same time, the Congress resolved to resist any invasion by troops, or infringements of states' rights by Carranza.<sup>51</sup> The legislators gave De la Huerta full powers over all state finances and military

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<sup>47</sup> New York Times, April 7, 1920.

<sup>48</sup> Times, April 11, 1920.

<sup>49</sup> Letter from Consul at Nogales to Secretary of State, April 7, 1920, FR: 1920, 134.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Consul of Nogales to Secretary of State, April 10, 1920, FR: 1920, 135.

<sup>51</sup> Times, April 11, 1920.

operations until the end of September, but decided to delay the repudiation of the federal government until its troops arrived in Sonora.<sup>52</sup> The municipal officials in the state quickly approved the stand taken by De la Huerta; the Congress, and most of the army units stationed in Sonora willingly changed sides. The state seized all customs houses and federal properties.<sup>53</sup>

De la Huerta appointed Calles, who had resigned his ministry, as military chief of the Northwest. Calles ignored an ultimatum by General Diéguez threatening military reprisals if the state did not rejoin the union. He ordered troops to areas susceptible to invasion, mobilized the Yaquis, and after quick successes against the few federal holdouts in the state, prepared to move into Sinaloa. The generals began to desert Carranza to join the right side.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, Obregón had been touring Mexico in his role as candidate for the presidency. In Monterrey, he received a summons from the Minister of War ordering him to Mexico City to answer questions on an allegedly treasonous letter mailed to him but intercepted by the government. Although his associates feared a trap, Obregón went to the capital. While he was in Mexico City the tensions in Sonora finally

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<sup>52</sup> Letter from the Consul at Guaymas to the Secretary of State, April 10, 1920, FR: 1920, 136.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from the Consul at Nogales to Secretary of State, April 11, 1920, FR: 1920, 136.

<sup>54</sup> Times, April 14, 15, 1920.

reached the peak that began the rebellion. Obregón, knowing how friendly Carranza and De la Huerta had been, at first believed the whole episode to be a farce. When he realized that Sonora had indeed rebelled, he censured the movement and the attitude of the Sonorans for complicating his position in Mexico City. Obregón complained to friends that Calles had deliberately offended the central government to take advantage of the political situation.<sup>55</sup> When firm news of the true state of affairs reached him, he escaped from the capital.

From Guerrero, he issued a manifesto calling for a return to the Constitution of 1857. Since he was opposing Carranza, and Carranza was associated with the Constitution of 1917, Obregón considered that the first step to take. But De la Huerta opposed the principles of the manifesto and would not allow its publication in Sonora. Obregón then retracted his disavowal of the Constitution, and in a second manifesto from Chilpancingo, placed himself at the orders of the Governor of Sonora.<sup>56</sup>

The rebellion in Sonora was providential, if not pre-arranged, and Mexicans, knowing of the association of Calles, De la Huerta, and Obregón, perceived it to be the opening

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<sup>55</sup> Miguel Alessio Robles, A Medio Camino (Mexico, D.F., 1949), 44. Obregón was staying in the Alessio Robles' home while in Mexico City.

<sup>56</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 147-148; Taracena, Séxtima etapa, 1919-1920, 219. Obregón said that those in Sonora had acted without his knowledge and attributed all to him.

move in Obregón's bid for power. His campaign reached the workers and the farmers, who had received only promises from Carranza, and their leaders offered their support. Politicians who discerned the wisdom of mollifying those groups also supported Obregón, but knew that he could not win an election while Carranza remained in power. Hence the Sonoran revolt signaled a general rebellion.

In Mexico City, the press naturally denounced the revolt, as did Bonillas and the Supreme Court. Bonillas held that the revolt was a personal conflict between Obregón and Carranza. He maintained that Sonora had attempted to obstruct the propaganda of himself and General Gonzáles, and that federal troops were sent to the state to guarantee to each candidate proper facilities and free elections. The Supreme Court rejected Sonora's claim that her sovereignty was violated, and with much truth asserted that the trouble stemmed from the determination of Obregón's followers to win the election by fair or foul means.<sup>57</sup> Carranza insisted that the revolt was local, even as news of uprisings all over Mexico reached him. Obregón's supporters endorsed the Sonoran move and federal troops throughout the country deserted to follow Sonora.

The Sonora revolutionaries issued the Plan of Agua Prieta on April 23, 1920. The Plan stated that Venustiano

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<sup>57</sup> Times, April 15, 16, 18, 1920.

Carranza had violated the laws of the country and that the people after exhausting legal recourse must assume sovereignty. The Plan declared Carranza deposed, repudiated officials installed by him, recognized the Constitution of 1917 as the fundamental law, and declared Adolfo de la Huerta to be Supreme Commander, pro tempore, of the Liberal Constitutionalist Army. Upon the occupation of Mexico City by the Liberal Constitutionalist Army, De la Huerta would call a special session of Congress to elect a provisional president.<sup>58</sup> De la Huerta after taking a leave of absence from the governorship accepted the Supreme Command and appointed Calles Minister of War.<sup>59</sup>

As the rebels advanced on Mexico City, General Pablo González, Carranza's last hope, joined the revolt. Carranza and his entourage abandoned the capital, taking the treasury and the archives, and entrained for Veracruz. The commander of Veracruz, General Guadalupe Sánchez, revolted and cut railroad lines into the port. The trains were stopped and Carranza and the small retinue remaining with him fled to the mountains.

Two days after Carranza left Mexico City, the armies of Generals González and Obregón quietly entered the city. Hearing of Carranza's flight, De la Huerta and Obregón gave

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<sup>58</sup> Valenzuela, Sonora y Carranza, Photocopy of the Plan of Agua Prieta following page 275.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 67.



instructions that his life be spared, and made his safety the responsibility of any officer who encountered him.<sup>60</sup>

On May 21, Carranza was killed by a former federal officer.

General González and his army of 22,000 men had reached Mexico City before the arrival of the main body of the Obregón forces. González, who had revolted against Carranza, but had not adhered to the Plan of Agua Prieta, could have controlled the city had he so desired. Instead, he compromised with Obregón in what has been called the "Pact of Chapultepec." In that convention they agreed to submit the Plan of Agua Prieta for legislative consideration, and Obregón promised to support González for the interim presidency. For Obregón, if González won, there would be one less presidential rival, since González could not succeed himself. Believing the interim presidency assured, González withdrew from the presidential race and planned his cabinet.<sup>61</sup>

From Hermosillo, De la Huerta ordered the convocation of the National Congress to name an interim president in conformity with the Plan of Agua Prieta. He submitted three names to the Congress for consideration; in addition the

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<sup>60</sup> Times, May 5, 12, 1920. Information on the fall, flight, and death of Carranza may be obtained from many of the sources listed in the Introduction; in addition, see Librería de Quiroga, ed., La Verdad sobre la Muerte de Carranza (San Antonio, Texas, N. D.): and Ramon Beteta, Camino a Tlaxcalantongo (Mexico, D. F., 1961).

<sup>61</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 39; De la Huerta, Memorias, 91, 148.

Congress injected his name, and those of three governors.<sup>62</sup> Obregón's promised support for González failed to materialize. On May 24, 1920, the day that Carranza's body was interred, the Congress met to choose an interim president. By a vote of 224 to 31, they chose Adolfo de la Huerta to complete Carranza's term and ordered him to appear before a joint session of Congress on June 1 to take the oath of office.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 55-57.

<sup>63</sup> Diario Oficial, May 27, 1920.

CHAPTER II  
THE PRESIDENCY: PART I  
RESTORING THE PEACE

On the afternoon of June 1, 1920, De la Huerta left his hotel for the Chamber of Deputies escorted by picked mounted troops, among which the Yaquis were conspicuous. Before his arrival the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in joint session formally ratified his election. Obregón and González, both in civilian dress, sat in the same box and led the applause as De la Huerta entered.<sup>1</sup> The assembled spectators saw

a young man.....of weak step and insecure movements, conducted by two deputies toward the platform of honor of the General Congress [where he] raised his arm and with a trembling voice promised the nation to comply with the law and with the duties that the high position of President of the nation imposes on him.<sup>2</sup>

The new President delivered no inaugural address; after he read the oath he bowed to the senators and deputies and left as quietly as he had come.

Most of the men chosen to fill De la Huerta's cabinet had gained their preeminence through military campaigns. As Secretary of War and Navy, De la Huerta named General Plutarco Elías Calles; as Secretary of Communications and Public Works, General Pascual Ortiz Rubio; and as Minister

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times, June 3, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Excelsior (Mexico City), June 2, 1920.

of Finance and Public Credit, General Salvador Alvarado. Obregón criticized the appointments of Calles and Alvarado, saying that their friendship with De la Huerta did not qualify them for their posts. When he expressed his displeasure at the choice of Calles, whose military record was not outstanding, De la Huerta observed that he had chosen Calles, not for his military accomplishments, but because he trusted him. Personal enmity caused Obregón to be especially critical of the appointment of Salvador Alvarado, who as governor of Yucatán had founded the Socialist Party in that state. De la Huerta ignored the complaints.<sup>3</sup> De la Huerta also appointed General Jacinto B. Treviño as Secretary of Commerce and Labor, General Antonio I. Villarreal as Secretary of Agriculture and Development, and Miguel Covarrubias as Minister of Foreign Relations. He retained Rafael Zubaran Capmany as Mayor of Mexico City.

De la Huerta had arrived in the capital amid a controversy over the death of Carranza. The murder of the former President had removed a potential source of trouble to the incoming administration, but at the same time created problems for it. Inevitably, the innocence of the leadership of the Agua Prieta movement was questioned, which forced the government to investigate the circumstances of the death. Publicly, Obregón accused Carranza's escort of deserting

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<sup>3</sup> Alessio Robles, A Medio Camino (Mexico, D.F., 1949), 64-66.

him; privately, he reportedly boasted of the skill displayed by the assassin. Then reproved by General González, he ceased to boast and joined González to announce the formation of a committee to investigate Carranza's death.<sup>4</sup>

The committee formed by the two generals interviewed the officers and officials who accompanied Carranza's body back to the capital. Their evidence indicated treachery and assassination on the part of General Rodolfo Herrero, who had joined the group to lead it to sanctuary. Herrero had concocted the suicide story and forced the prisoners to sign a statement affirming the story. The committee recommended a formal investigation and the Senate concurred.<sup>5</sup>

The generals who had been with Carranza were arrested and charged as accessories in the death of Carranza and the removal of public funds.<sup>6</sup> In the formal hearings which followed, Herrero admitted that he had not been present at the time of death; that his knowledge came from his brother and an aid who executed the plan under orders from General Alberto Basave y Pina. Basave y Pina, he asserted, had orders from General Obregón. General Basave y Pina denied receiving any such orders.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alfonso Taracena, La Verdadera Revolución Mexicana, Séptima etapa, 1920-1921 (Mexico, D. F., 1961), 5-11.

<sup>5</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 15-18, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Excelsior, June 8, 1920.

<sup>7</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 31-33.

The court found the generals responsible for Carranza's death because they did not die by his side, but freed them of the charge for lack of evidence. After a short stay in prison pending resolution of the charge of removal of public funds, the charge was dropped and the prisoners freed.<sup>8</sup>

No charges were filed against the perpetrators of the crime. Rodolfo Herrero confessed to a friend that Obregón had wanted to demote him when he learned the truth, but Calles was present and suspended the order.<sup>9</sup> Late in July, 1920, Calles named Herrero as chief of a military sector in Veracruz state to replace General Lázaro Cárdenas, who became governor of Michoacán. Herrero remained there until January, 1921, when presidential rulings stripped him of his rank and ousted from the army all men associated with him at the time of Carranza's death.<sup>10</sup> Carrancista rebels hanged his brother in 1922.<sup>11</sup>

De la Huerta's first press conference signaled that his term would be one of conciliation. The new President invited expatriates to return to Mexico on condition that those with charges pending against them would have to stand trial.<sup>12</sup> He announced that confiscated property of rebels would be

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<sup>8</sup> Times, June 13, 1920; Taracena, Séptima etapa, 31-34.

<sup>9</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 33.

<sup>10</sup> John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico (Austin, Texas, 1961), 110.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 116. <sup>12</sup> Times, June 2, 1920.

returned if the claimant could give legal proof of title or present two witnesses to swear to the validity of the claim. The possessions and property belonging to the Huerta family, Félix Díaz, Pancho Villa, and José Maytorena, and certain properties given to agricultural colonies or lands reallocated to ejidos were excepted.<sup>13</sup> One of De la Huerta's earliest decrees restored eighteen confiscated temples in Yucatán to clerical control.<sup>14</sup>

The Mexico which De la Huerta proposed to govern had need of his conciliatory abilities. The country had been torn by internal warfare since 1910. Only a few months under Madero had there been peace, and the power struggles initiated then still continued. Emiliano Zapata was dead through the treachery of Pablo González, but his followers still fought for land. González, thwarted in his bid for the presidency, remained a threat to peace. Pancho Villa was a bandit again, but this hero of the Chihuahuan farmer was potentially dangerous simply because he was Pancho Villa. Félix Díaz, decried as the murderer of the martyred Madero, had no army; but numerous Mexicans still supported his views. Among the

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<sup>13</sup> Diario Oficial, June 17, 1920.

<sup>14</sup> Diario Oficial, "Informe rendido por el C. Adolfo de la Huerta, presidente constitucional substituto de la República, ante el H. Congreso de la Unión, el día 1º de Septiembre de 1920, y contestación del C. Presidente de la Cámara de Diputados."

tremendous army mobilized originally to fight Huerta, many minor officers nursed political ambitions. Obviously, the country would have to be pacified before progress could be made toward any other goal. Pacification would be De la Huerta's contribution to the country.

De la Huerta persuaded zapatista leaders to come to Mexico City for conferences on their demands. Many of them knew De la Huerta already. As acting Secretary of Government in 1914, he had made peace with six thousand of their men in the capital against the wishes of General Pablo González, and without Carranza's knowledge. In 1920, the leaders remembered his generosity and came readily. More than seventy generals submitted to the government, thus terminating the Zapata movement.<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, Zapata's fight for land was carried on in the halls of Congress and from Chapultepec Palace.

The election of De la Huerta as interim president eliminated Pablo González' hopes of legally attaining the presidency in 1920. He had withdrawn from the presidential race before the Congress convened; after De la Huerta took office, González announced his retirement to private life in a manifesto to the nation. In that public statement he insisted that he retired to avoid friction before the elections, not because of pressure from Obregón's supporters. He also

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<sup>15</sup> Adolfo de la Huerta, Memorias de don Adolfo de la Huerta. Transcrito y comentarios por Roberto Guzmán Esparza (Mexico, D.F., 1957), 163-164.



denied that he would lead a military uprising in Nuevo León, his home state.<sup>16</sup> González then returned to his home in Monterrey.

Whether González actually planned a revolt cannot be ascertained, but he was shortly involved in one. Northern generals friendly to or associated with him began a series of rebellions which were quickly suppressed. General Carlos Osuna rebelled in Coahuila. General Jesús M. Guajardo, Zapata's assassin, rebelled in Durango state, near Torreon, on July 2.<sup>17</sup> General Ricardo González tried without success to subvert the garrisons at Cuatro Ciénegas and Piedras Negras, Coahuila.

Minister of War Calles denied there was rebellion in the Republic, but on July 15, when the capital newspapers announced that Pablo González had revolted, Calles indicated that he had known that González was planning to do so. General Arnulfo R. Gómez, chief of military operations in Tamaulipas, had warned Calles from Monterrey that General Ireneo Villarreal planned to revolt in that city. Calles

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<sup>16</sup> Excelsior, June 12, 1920.

<sup>17</sup> General Jesús M. Guajardo was known as the killer of Emiliano Zapata. On orders of General Pablo González he had pretended to desert the federal army. To convince Zapata of his sincerity, he shot fifty men who had been taken prisoners. Zapata agreed to meet him, and the agrarian leader was shot at the rendezvous. When González deserted Carranza, Guajardo did also. Calles had ordered Guajardo north to join the fight against Villa.

ordered a close watch kept on these old revolutionary friends. Gómez delivered orders to Villarreal to concentrate his force in Saltillo immediately. Villarreal moved his forces a short distance then returned to Monterrey, believing that Gómez had left for his post in Tamaulipas. Gómez, suspecting trouble, had remained in Monterrey to counter it. Villarreal attacked the barracks at three o'clock in the morning; within two hours Gómez had routed his forces.<sup>18</sup>

Calles asserted that all of the northern rebel generals had conferred with Gonzáles, and ordered the arrest of the General and his secretary. In the possession of the General's secretary, the authorities found a revolutionary plan which disowned the government.<sup>19</sup> The Minister of War explained to the nation that their guilt was obvious, and appointed a Special War Council to judge Gonzáles. De la Huerta, fearing an illegal execution, immediately ordered the military commander of the Monterrey district to guarantee Gonzáles absolute protection. Gonzáles must answer the charges against him, the President said, but the proceedings must be legal.<sup>20</sup>

After the arrest of Gonzáles, General Guajardo, who had evaded federal troops, arrived in Monterrey to visit his wife

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<sup>18</sup> Excelsior, July 15, 1920.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., July 16, 1920.

<sup>20</sup> Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1920 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1920) (3 vols., Washington, D. C., 1936), 56.

and son. His presence was immediately reported to the chief of military operations, who arrested him, and summarily executed Guajardo the following morning. Rumors circulated that he had come to incite a rebellion in the garrison to liberate General González.<sup>21</sup>

The trial of González convened in Monterrey after the district judge ruled that the General's constitutional rights had not been violated. González vowed that he had never authorized anyone to use his name in support of a rebellion, nor had he discussed a rebellion with anyone. The prosecutor declared that González had given tacit approval to the rebellion because he had refused to condemn the attitude of his friends and partisans. The trial then degenerated into a verbal battle between the prosecution and the defense which had nothing to do with the question of guilt. No proof of his guilt was presented. After the verbal exchange the Special Council unanimously voted that it accepted his guilt, but was incompetent to judge the defendant, and passed the case to the jurisdiction of an Ordinary War Council.<sup>22</sup> Before that Council met, a telegram from Calles ordered the General freed. The decision was not his alone.

After Calles had convened the Special Council, De la Huerta secretly ordered the official telegrapher to secure

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<sup>21</sup> Excelsior, July 18, 19, 1920.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., July 21, 1920.

his approval for all telegrams dispatched by the Minister of War before they were sent. When the Council declared González guilty, Calles prepared a telegram ordering his execution. De la Huerta intercepted and held the message.

As soon as Miguel Alessio Robles, the presidential secretary, learned of the death sentence, he obtained an interview with Calles. He tried to convince him that González should not be shot; that politically such a move was bad, but Calles would only agree to speak to the President before he acted. Calles did not know that De la Huerta had stopped his telegram, and was sure that González was dead. The Chief Executive finally informed him that the message had not been sent. He persuaded Calles to send a telegram to the chief of military operations in Nuevo León ordering González freed. They also consulted Obregón, who agreed to the communique because he had been considering such action himself.<sup>23</sup> González left Mexico.

A week following the settlement of the González problem, the government announced the submission of Pancho Villa. The interim President and the great chieftain had met in 1913 when De la Huerta went to Tucson to confer with the errant governor Maytorena. Villa had been in Tucson at the same time, and De la Huerta had asked him to return to Sonora with him.

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<sup>23</sup> Alessio Robles, A Medio Camino, 67-72; Miguel Alessio Robles, Ideales de la Revolución (Mexico, D. F., 1935), 308-309.

Villa, however, preferred to operate in Chihuahua; he knew neither the people nor the terrain in Sonora. Villa had then returned to Chihuahua to raise a force to fight for Carranza.<sup>24</sup> Carranza sent De la Huerta to talk to Villa several times when the break between the First Chief and the commander of the Division of the North was imminent. The men developed a friendly respect for each other which survived Villa's break with Carranza.<sup>25</sup>

Villa had contacted both De la Huerta and Calles to offer his services to the Agua Prieta movement. Calles spoke for the leadership of the rebellion in rejecting the aid of the discredited but dangerous chieftain. They preferred that he retire to private life.<sup>26</sup> Arrangements were made for a meeting between Calles and Villa, but neither trusted the other, and their emissaries conferred in their stead. Villa's man had instructions to accept submission if the military ranks of the villistas were recognized, if a ranch were provided so that they might make an honest living, and if guarantees of protection were given so that they might enter and leave various cities in peace.<sup>27</sup>

Calles' messenger delivered an ultimatum to Villa to the

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<sup>24</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 55-57. <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 153-155.

<sup>26</sup> Clodoveo Valenzuela and Amado Cháverri, Sonora y Carranza (Mexico, D. F., 1921), 269. Letter from Calles to Villa, May 2, 1920. Notes to Generals Enríquez, Joaquín Amaro, and Eugenio Martínez.

<sup>27</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 39-40.

effect that Villa should take up residence in Sonora, remain there until after the general election in 1920, and then retire to private life.<sup>28</sup> Federal forces then tried to lure Villa into a trap, but Villa, suspecting treachery, escaped. In revenge Villa attacked and captured Parral, Chihuahua.<sup>29</sup> Calles swore he would continue his campaign against Villa and ordered 15,000 men to move north. Through June Villa rampaged in Chihuahua, raiding, cutting railroad lines, and eluding the troops sent to stop him.

After De la Huerta became president, Villa offered his congratulations and indicated that he would submit but could not come to Mexico City because of plots against him. De la Huerta dispatched a confidential agent to discuss terms for submission. Villa demanded a rural property that he would select for division among his troops.<sup>30</sup>

Calles publicly opposed any arrangement with Villa short of unconditional surrender,<sup>31</sup> but De la Huerta negotiated, also assuring Villa of his good faith. The President offered Villa the hacienda of his choice and a separate grant to be divided among his 250 soldiers. The hacienda would be

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<sup>28</sup> New York Times, May 25, 1920.

<sup>29</sup> Times, June 6, 1920.

<sup>30</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 159. De la Huerta later discovered that Calles had given orders for Villa to be ambushed if he made any effort to submit.

<sup>31</sup> Excelsior, July 10, 1920.

tax-free for a year. He also promised that Calles would respect the arrangement.<sup>32</sup>

At first Villa rejected De la Huerta's offer. He preferred to live on his small ranch near San Isabel, Chihuahua. The President insisted, however, that if he were to live among enemies in Chihuahua with only a fifty-man guard, he should live in a hacienda which could be easily defended.<sup>33</sup>

On the morning of July 26, President De la Huerta received an urgent call from Sabinas, Coahuila. Villa requested a conference. The President doubted that the summons came from Villa, after all, was not Villa in Chihuahua? Reports of the outlaw placed him near Parral, surrounded by federal troops.

Villa notified the sceptical President that he and his men had just seized Sabinas and now wanted to put themselves at his service. He described an incredible 700 kilometer march they had made across the desert from Encinillas, Chihuahua, because the military in that state would not grant guarantees. The railroad telegrapher in Sabinas confirmed that Villa had taken the town.

De la Huerta, convinced of the identity of his caller, told Villa that he would instruct General Eugenio Martínez, chief of military operations in Coahuila, to proceed to

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<sup>32</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 49.

<sup>33</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 160.

Sabinas to arrange the submission.<sup>34</sup> Martínez, when informed of his mission, doubted that Villa could be trusted, but De la Huerta insisted that he take a fifty-man escort and go to sign the pact with Villa. Martínez accepted, but requested clearance to telegraph from each important station to learn if there was not a change of instructions.<sup>35</sup>

Martínez notified Villa of his mission, that he had given orders for the suspension of hostilities, and that Villa could trust him. Villa answered with the usual amenities, then to show his good will liberated seventy prisoners.<sup>36</sup>

Martínez arrived at Sabinas on July 27, and the next morning he and Villa signed the pact. Under the terms of the agreement Villa retired to private life. The government ceded to Villa the Hacienda de Canutillo, located in the state of Durango, for his residence. Villa would have a guard of fifty men chosen by himself and paid by the government. To Villa's men, the government would pay one year's income according to the rank held; furthermore, they would be given lands from the public domain in places which they would specify. Men desiring to continue a career at arms would be incorporated into the national army.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Excelsior, July 27, 1920.

<sup>35</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 161

<sup>36</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 58.

<sup>37</sup> Excelsior, July 29, 1920.



The Hacienda de Canutillo was not, as events proved, national property, and the government purchased it for 600,000 pesos. At that price it could be considered a bargain; a campaign to subdue Villa would have cost millions in money and countless lives.

Obregón and Calles opposed any agreement with Villa; both telegraphed their disapproval to De la Huerta. Obregón also sent his telegram to the governors and military chiefs asking them to protest to the President. He did not believe that Mexico could be peaceful with Villa alive, and questioned whether his protection by the Mexican government might not be a source of trouble with the United States.<sup>38</sup> Only one governor and one general responded to Obregón's telegram. The uneasy peace survived, as did Villa until his assassination in 1923.

The Upper District of Baja California next received governmental attention. Estéban Cantú, Governor of that isolated state, had ruled as he willed under Carranza, ignoring the criticism of the central government. When De la Huerta took office, Cantú declared that he would remain faithful to Carranza. Many carrancistas entered the state or offered support. In addition the state offered refuge to unregenerate villistas, maytorenistas, and other dissatisfied factions.<sup>39</sup> Cantú had refused to surrender his government

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<sup>38</sup> Alessio Robles, Ideales, 66.

<sup>39</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 170.

after De la Huerta's election, and had ignored a summons to the capital.<sup>40</sup> The Governor called on the state to resist an armed invasion.<sup>41</sup> Actually, Cantú made no overt move to disown the government, but his attitude was rebellious.

Cantú requested of the United States Secretary of State early in June, 1920, an export license for arms.<sup>42</sup> In the last days of July he reiterated his request, pleading that arms were urgently needed to protect the state against an invasion by the Yaquis. The Governor carefully noted that he must also protect the irrigation system that furnished water for American crops in the Imperial Valley, and called attention to the large United States investments in that area.<sup>43</sup>

The State Department refused to permit arms and munitions to be shipped to either faction in Mexico, and warned both Cantú and the central government against any action

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<sup>40</sup> Excelsior, July 24, 1920.

<sup>41</sup> Excelsior, July 28, July 29, 1920; Telegram from Consul at Mexicali to Secretary of State, July 28, 1920, FR: 1920, 157.

<sup>42</sup> The State Department ruled that a license was required for the export of arms into Mexico on May 1, 1920, thereby preventing the sale of arms to either faction in the dispute between Carranza and Sonora. Ruling of Department of State in response to Memorandum of Mexican Charge in Washington, FR: 1920, 242.

<sup>43</sup> Telegram from Cantú to Secretary of State, July 28, 1920, FR: 1920, 246

that would jeopardize American lives and property.<sup>44</sup> Cantú commandeered fifty cases of dynamite from an irrigation corporation, forcing the State Department to embargo dynamite.<sup>45</sup> Two United States aviators employed by Cantú were ordered to return to the United States to avoid endangering neutrality.<sup>46</sup>

De la Huerta moved skillfully to avoid what Excelsior, one of the capital newspapers, referred to as another "Texas" situation. The President first ordered General Eugenio Martínez and his troops to Baja California in a move which appeared to be a threat but was actually a ruse. That expedition would embark from Guaymas or Mazatlán, Sinaloa. However, another young general and a future president of Mexico, Abelardo L. Rodríguez, insisted that he be given command of the expedition so that he might build a reputation as Martínez had already done. De la Huerta eventually agreed to the change, but Calles protested because Rodríguez's rank was too newly acquired for him to command an expeditionary force

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<sup>44</sup> Secretary of State to Consul at Mexicali, telegram, July 31, 1920, FR: 1920, 158; Secretary of State to Chargé, July 31, 1920, Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Telegram from Consul at Mexicali to Secretary of State, July 31, 1920, FR: 1920, 246; Telegram from Secretary of State to Consul at Mexicali, August 2, 1920, FR: 1920, 247.

<sup>46</sup> Telegram from Consul at Mexicali to Secretary of State, August 6, 1920, FR: 1920, 160.

of six thousand men. De la Huerta reminded him that the trip was a farce, but Calles did not believe that De la Huerta's show of force would succeed.

As the military phase of his plan was being organized, De la Huerta called on many of his vast circle of friends and acquaintances to bring personal pressure to bear on Cantú, each to operate independently and without the knowledge of the others. He sent Roberto V. Pesqueira to influence the United States press. The government would pay the expenses of entertainment for the journalists, but not for the purchase of a newspaper. De la Huerta reminded him that he expected results for the money.

The President then contacted personal friends who were friendly with the various factions in Baja California. To Juan Agraz, a chemist and old friend from the National Preparatory School, he assigned the role of influencing Cantú's chief advisor. Vito Alessio Robles, the brother of the presidential secretary, had been commander of Cantú's squadron in Military College. De la Huerta dispatched him to convince Cantú that should he come to Mexico City where his rank would be advanced a grade, and he would receive guarantees of protection.

He sent another friend from prep school days, a huertista, to talk to that faction in Baja California. He was to carry assurances that their rank would be recognized and their past transgressions forgiven if they cooperated

in the pacification. A former chief of the maytorenistas went as an emissary to his companions, and Villa agreed to send one of his men to convert his fellows. The Mexican consul at Los Angeles had influence with labor and labor leaders so that President asked him to contact the laborers and remind them of his pro-labor record as governor of Sonora.

De la Huerta instructed Fernando Iglesias Calderón, a senator and the director of Obregón's campaign, to go to Washington to obtain Woodrow Wilson's cooperation. He cautioned him not to mention recognition, because the purpose of the mission was not recognition. Iglesias Calderón was to tell Wilson that the President was restoring order to the frontier, and the only disorderly section remaining was Baja California. De la Huerta maintained

if he is, as he has preached so much, a friend of morality and of the morality of the people he ought to remove all those associates of the sewer that exists in Baja California.<sup>47</sup>

The President admonished Calderón again not to mention recognition. Eight days later, Iglesias Calderón arrived in Washington and conferred soon after with Wilson. The United States reacted favorably to De la Huerta's overtures.

Cantú faced a barrage from all sides. In addition to the embarking troops and the personal pressure, the Yaqui

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<sup>47</sup> De la Huertas, Memorias, 172.

Indians moved toward Magdalena in north-central Sonora. This move, which Cantú interpreted as an invasion threat, De la Huerta knew to be a pilgrimage to honor their patron saint in that village. He did not correct Cantú's misconception, and ordered barrels of water placed alongside the road to increase the appearance of a campaign. To upset Cantú even more, the people in the state shouted "Viva De la Huerta!" every night, and the Governor did not feel safe in his state.

As a final step De la Huerta ordered Luis M. Salazar, a personal friend of Cantú, to call on the Governor to discuss the situation. Salazar informed Cantú that the President would not be the least hesitant about using military force to take the state. He had sent him, a friend, so Cantú would not be disgraced by having to submit to an enemy. De la Huerta did not name Salazar as governor, but suggested that Cantú turn the state government over to him.<sup>48</sup> Cantú yielded on condition that his army not be persecuted.<sup>49</sup>

The sinking of their ship at Mazatlán, and high water on the Colorado River delayed the arrival of federal troops in Baja California; Cantú was in Los Angeles and the state

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 168-174.

<sup>49</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 61.

was peaceful under Salazar when they arrived.<sup>50</sup> Baja California was brought under the control of the central government without a shot or a casualty.

There still remained one potential source of danger to the central government. Félix Díaz had been a continuous irritant to the Carranza government, and was in Veracruz state when that government fell. Early in June, 1920, a friend of Díaz approached Obregón regarding an arrangement. Obregón declared that the administration would never treat with Díaz, and attacked him as the slayer of Madero. However, Obregón agreed that Díaz should be permitted to leave the country if he would first manifest publicly that his armed struggle had ended.<sup>51</sup>

Díaz engaged in polemics and evaded the question of whether his rebellion had ended.<sup>52</sup> The President replied that he must surrender his forces to the Secretary of War, and that it was imperative that he leave the country. De la Huerta agreed to confer with him, if Obregón gave his approval. Obregón repeated that Díaz could not remain in Mexico because of the general enmity against him. The government refused to be forced to defend him or to be responsible for him.<sup>53</sup> In October Díaz finally transmitted

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<sup>50</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 76.

<sup>51</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 28-29.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 37.      <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 48.

to General Guadalupe Sánchez, chief of military operations in Veracruz, the conditions for his surrender. He asked that the government pay off his men, return valuable property, and guarantee his residence in the country. Sánchez telegraphed the terms to De la Huerta, who acceded to all except the last one. Díaz could not remain in Mexico.

Díaz refused to leave claiming that as a Mexican he had the right to remain in Mexico. De la Huerta answered with an ultimatum: Díaz could voluntarily continue the conferences in the port of Veracruz, or face arrest.<sup>54</sup> Díaz declined to go to Veracruz, and Sánchez arrested him to take him there. During the march to the port Sánchez received orders from Calles to shoot the prisoner without delay.<sup>55</sup> Sánchez notified De la Huerta of the order, and De la Huerta countermanded it because he had given Díaz guarantees of protection.<sup>56</sup> The General delivered an ungrateful Díaz to the port.

The Senate debated the Díaz question, but reached no agreement. Some members demanded a trial, others demanded his release.<sup>57</sup> After acrimonious discussions, the Chamber of Deputies named a committee to ask the President for

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<sup>54</sup> Excelsior, October 6, 1920.

<sup>55</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 75-76.

<sup>56</sup> Excelsior, October 5, 1920; De la Huerta, Memorias, 164.

<sup>57</sup> Excelsior, October 9, 1920.



permission to charge Díaz with the murder of Madero. De la Huerta disclosed the progress of the talks with Díaz to the committee, but vowed that Calles' order would not be carried out unless the Chamber resolved otherwise.<sup>58</sup> Before the Chamber decided anything, De la Huerta informed Díaz of the committee's visit and purpose, and cautioned that it would be wise for him to leave the country. Still declaring his innocence in the death of Madero, Díaz bowed to deportation as an order from the President.<sup>59</sup> He sailed for Havana on October 11, 1920.

The Díaz furor aroused anew congressional interest in the accused assassins of Madero and Pino Suarez. The Deputies named a committee to broach the subject of punishment to the President, and filed a formal accusation against Rafael Pimienta, who supposedly led the escort that fatal night, as the murderer of Pino Suarez.<sup>60</sup> Vituperative declarations against Pimienta by the Deputies stirred the Attorney-General to call for an investigation of the charges.<sup>61</sup> Pimienta implicated Francisco Cárdenas and Agustín Figueras in the deaths, declaring that Cárdenas was the commander of the escort that shot the President and Vice-President. After hearing Pimienta's

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<sup>58</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 77-81.

<sup>59</sup> Excelsior, October 9, 1920.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., October 12, 1920.

<sup>61</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 84-85.

description of the crime, Calles requested extradition for Cárdenas from Guatemala where he had taken refuge.<sup>62</sup> The Guatemalan government agreed and arrested Cárdenas, but he obtained a pistol and shot himself. On his deathbed, he confessed to leading the murder squad.<sup>63</sup> The court decided that responsibility for the death of Pino Suarez could not be attributed to Pimienta, and he was freed.<sup>64</sup> Figueras, who was in the United States, was not extradited.

The nation relaxed into unaccustomed quiet with the retirement or exile of Mexico's major disruptive elements. Several other small rebellions flared, but were quickly subdued and the forces dispersed. For the first time in a century of independence, the government seriously contemplated an attack on Mexico's cursed militarism. The restoration of relative peace permitted such thoughts.

De la Huerta, Obregón, and Calles agreed that the army should be reduced in size. The military presented a constant danger to the central government because the individual units were each loyal to their immediate local superior, not to an impersonal government in far away Mexico City. It was not a national nor a professional army.

The army, with an estimated strength of 100,000 men cost

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 91-93.    <sup>63</sup> Ibid., 104-105.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 109-111.

Mexico almost 1,000,000 pesos daily.<sup>65</sup> Obregón suggested that it be reorganized and reduced by half.<sup>66</sup> The funds of the national treasury recovered from Carranza's trains were used to pay the 22,000 troops of General Pablo Gonzáles and retire them from the field. Rebel forces, once subdued, were similarly disbanded, thereby reducing the effective forces even further.

Reorganization was necessary to professionalize the army and to teach it modern war techniques. Calles, as Minister of War, directed the creation of a general Chief of Staff and Department of the Chief of Staff, and the establishment of an Aviation Department and Military Aviation School. He reorganized and augmented the Military College, and named commissioners to instruct the troops.<sup>67</sup>

As the next president, Obregón would continue the course charted under De la Huerta for the weakening of Mexico's militarism. Ironically, it would be De la Huerta himself who reversed the process.

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<sup>65</sup> Dulles, Yesterday, 83.

<sup>66</sup> Times, June 4, June 15, 1920.

<sup>67</sup> "Informe rendido por el C. Adolfo de la Huerta..."

CHAPTER III  
THE PRESIDENCY: PART II  
DOMESTIC PROGRAM AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

In one of his first actions as president, De la Huerta convoked a special session of Congress to discuss the creation of a Department of Public Education; the reestablishment of normal relations between the central and state governments which had been disrupted by the Agua Prieta movement; the reform of the federal election law and the courts of Common Law; and the passage of a labor law. The Congress convened on July 21, 1920.<sup>1</sup>

To fulfill his desire to create a Department of Public Education, De la Huerta requested José Vasconcelos, Rector of the National University, to formulate a law to serve as a basis for such a department. Vasconcelos' plan called for the establishment of a ministry with branches throughout the country. The ministry would be subdivided into the Departments of Schools, Libraries, and Fine Arts. All cultural activities and institutions would be subject to the ministry. The establishment of such a ministry necessitated a constitutional amendment. To gain the support of the needed majority of state legislatures, Vasconcelos toured Mexico for three months. De la Huerta's term expired before the amendment could be approved, but he left the National University

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<sup>1</sup> Diario Oficial, June 16, 1920.

a budget of 18,000,000 pesos and functions of a ministry.<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Public Education was finally created in September, 1921, but Rector Vasconcelos had already launched a massive national education campaign.

De la Huerta named Vasconcelos as Rector of the University on June 9, and he immediately initiated a campaign against illiteracy. For that purpose he created an honorary corps of professors of elementary education composed of all people who had attained the third year of school, or who could read or write Castillian Spanish. The University awarded a diploma to those who agreed to conduct one reading and writing class each week for two or more persons. The class could meet in the teacher's home or any other locale, preferably on Sundays or feast days. For those who taught one hundred people to read and write, Vasconcelos promised preference for public offices.<sup>3</sup>

The Rector's program brought immediate response. In late November, he announced that in the preceding four months, two thousand honorary professors had taught reading to ten thousand persons. He also announced the formation of a public library in Mexico City, the founding of several schools for workers, and the development of a conservatory

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<sup>2</sup> José Vasconcelos, El Desastre (Mexico, D. F., 1938), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Alfonso Taracena, La Verdadera Revolución Mexicana, Séptima etapa, 1920-1921 (Mexico, D. F., 1961), 39.

orchestra.<sup>4</sup>

One of the announced motives for summoning the Congress to a special session was the restoration of the proper relationship between the states and the federal government. Under Article 14 of the Plan of Agua Prieta, the Chief of the Liberal Constitutional Army would name provisional governments for the states of Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, Querétaro, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas. Carranza had interfered with the elections in those states, hence their governments were not considered legitimate. In addition he would name governors for states which opposed or did not endorse the movement, or which for any other reason did not have a constitutional government. The provisional governors would call elections immediately; if election conflicts resulted, the Senate or the President would resolve them under authorization of the Constitution of 1917. The Constitution granted the Senate power to declare at its discretion that the constitutional powers of the states had vanished. With the agreement of two-thirds of the members present, the Senate could appoint a provisional governor from a list of three provided by the president. Under Article 29 of the Constitution, the president could suspend all constitutional guarantees in all or part of the Republic in the event of invasion, grave public disturbances, or any emergency endangering society.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 103.

De la Huerta designated General Lázaro Cárdenas, the district commander in Veracruz, to replace the provisional governor of Michoacán.<sup>5</sup> Cárdenas and De la Huerta had been friends since Madero's administration when Cárdenas had been stationed in Sonora.<sup>6</sup> Both men were friends of Francisco J. Múgica, one of the gubernatorial candidates in Michoacán.<sup>7</sup> The results of the election in the state were inconclusive, but the state legislature recognized Múgica as the new governor. De la Huerta ordered Cardenas not to publish the decree of the legislature, causing Múgica to protest that the central government desired to impose a governor. The state legislature ignored the presidential order, and Múgica was sworn in, occupying the capitol on September 22. That night, the partisans of the rival candidate attacked the capitol, but were repelled. The conflict caused the national Senate to declare that Michoacán had lost its sovereign powers on September 25. The Senate refused to consider De la Huerta's request to retract its decision.<sup>8</sup> Múgica continued to function as governor; however, until 1923, he was involved in litigation over the legality of his position.

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<sup>5</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 41-42.

<sup>6</sup> Adolfo de la Huerta, Memorias de don Adolfo de la Huerta. Transcrito y comentarios por Roberto Guzmán Exparza (Mexico, D. F., 1957), 42.

<sup>7</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 41-42.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 84.

The Senate declared that constitutional powers had disappeared in the state of Tabasco, but De la Huerta argued that the state government had supported the Agua Prieta movement and was therefore legal. He blocked the appointment of a provisional governor.<sup>9</sup> The Senate did remove the governor in October after one of his followers killed two Deputies and wounded the president of the state Congress over a defamatory article in a newspaper.<sup>10</sup>

During his short term in office, De la Huerta named provisional governors in nineteen states. At the end of November, thirteen states had constitutional governments.<sup>11</sup>

De la Huerta had mixed success in achieving desired congressional action in other areas. He did secure passage of minor electoral reforms,<sup>12</sup> but could not get labor legislation through the Congress. Serious strikes marked the last months of his term. In his six months in office, the Chief Executive intervened in and settled forty-three strikes, all in favor of labor.<sup>13</sup> In October, coal miners struck for a

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<sup>9</sup> Diario Oficial, "Informe rendido por el C. Adolfo de la Huerta, presidente constitucional substituto de la República, ante el H. Congreso de la Unión, el día 1º de Septiembre de 1920, y contestación del C. Presidente de la Cámara de Diputados."

<sup>10</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 85-87.

<sup>11</sup> "Informe rendido por el C. don Adolfo de la Huerta..."

<sup>12</sup> Diario Oficial, June 29, July 7, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> Wilfred Hardy Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929 (Stanford, California, 1931), 305.



hundred per cent increase in pay; the government recommended a twenty-five per cent increase and seized the mines after the owners refused to pay it. The proprietors yielded, and the mines were returned to private ownership with the warning that they must produce enough coal to meet industry demands or be seized again. A serious dock strike in Veracruz was handled in the same fashion.<sup>14</sup>

Concern for the workers also led to a liquor prohibition law. When a government study revealed that the peon spent the largest part of his pay immediately after receiving it on Saturday, the saloons were ordered to close at noon on Saturdays and to remain closed over Sundays. Restaurants were forbidden to serve wine with meals.<sup>15</sup>

Mexico's agricultural program crept slowly forward under De la Huerta. He continued the restoration of lands to the ejidos as begun under Carranza; indeed, under the law then in existence, he could do little more. The Agrarian Law of January '6, 1915, issued by Carranza from Veracruz was the legal basis for the distribution of land, and was incorporated into the Constitution of 1917. It was essentially conservative; the large estates were not threatened and

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<sup>14</sup> "Mexico under a New President," Current History, XIII part II (January, 1921), 113: "Mexico's Efforts of Recognition," Current History, XIII No. 3 (December, 1920), 461.

<sup>15</sup> Current History, XIII No. 2, (November, 1920), 291.

legal proof of title was needed for the restitution of lands to ejidos. The law emphasized justice and restitution, rather than individual land acquisition. It had originally allowed local authorities to make provisional grants with the assent of the national government. Under that provision De la Huerta as interim governor of Sonora had made grants to the Yaquis. Carranza had retracted the authorization, and restitution had proceeded very slowly. In an effort to hasten the return of the lands, De la Huerta restored the function of the local authorities in making provisional grants.<sup>16</sup>

To make lands available to the individual, Congress passed a temporary measure, the "Law of Vacant Lands." The law provided that interested individuals could petition for lands not under cultivation. Local authorities would determine the acreage allotment and fix payments to the original owner of the land.<sup>17</sup>

The Chamber of Deputies also considered legislation to divide large landed estates. Obregón, as president-elect, appeared before the Chamber to oppose such a law, because he believed that a small-property class must be created to feed Mexico before the large properties were divided.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Frank Tannebaum, Peace by Revolution (New York, 1933), 201-203.

<sup>17</sup> Diario Oficial, June 28, 1920.

<sup>18</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 94-98.

Mexico's financial situation remained critical throughout De la Huerta's term. When he took office, the treasury was empty. The "gold train" that left the capital with Carranza carried 11,000,000 gold pesos, all of the national metallic reserve. The administration recovered approximately 8,000,000 pesos and used it to pay off the forces of General Pablo González.

General Salvador Alvarado served as Finance Minister for two months, then went to New York to handle the affairs of the Yucatecan henequin monopoly which he had founded while governor of that state. De la Huerta and his advisors directed the ministry after his departure.<sup>19</sup>

In 1916, the Carranza government had issued the "unfalsifiable" notes that supposedly could not be counterfeited. They had quickly lost their value. Under De la Huerta, the ministry ordered that the paper money be taken in payment of official collections, cancelled, and returned to the treasury for destruction.<sup>20</sup>

Carranza had declared gold and silver to be the only legal tender in November, 1916. The price of silver rose in late 1919, thereby causing the disappearance of metallic currency from circulation. The administration had authorized

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<sup>19</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 175-176; Taracena, Séptima etapa, 64.

<sup>20</sup> Diario Oficial, June 10, 1920. Circular No. 31 of Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público.

the issuance of paper money in small denominations to replace the vanished coinage. The new issue lost value immediately, and prices rose. The price of silver dropped in 1920, and De la Huerta ordered the retirement of the notes. Most of the issue was retired during the De la Huerta term.<sup>21</sup> De la Huerta also paid some of the debts of the former government, retired 15,000,000 pesos of the bonds issued to banks as security for their metallic reserves, and subsidized certain business enterprises.<sup>22</sup>

In the field of foreign affairs, De la Huerta inherited all of the complaints and ill-will generated by the Revolution. The diplomatic gallery at De la Huerta's inauguration had only two occupants, the representatives of China and Guatemala. No other diplomats attended, either officially, or as civilian spectators. Their absence indicated that the new administration would be faced with the problem of recognition. The United States diplomatic corps had been cautioned to avoid any action that might be construed as giving recognition, and other major powers followed the United States' lead.<sup>23</sup>

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 21 "Informe rendido por el C. Adolfo de la Huerta..."

22 De la Huerta, Memorias, 176; Taracena, Séptima etapa, 64.

23 Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1920 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1920) (3 vols., Washington, D. C., 1936), III, 165, 167, 170.

The United States' attitude did not offer Mexico much hope that recognition would be quickly granted. In part the recommendations of the well-publicized Senate Sub-Committee on Foreign Relations, headed by Senator Albert B. Fall of New Mexico, reflected the United States position on Mexico. The Fall Committee, as it was popularly known, was formed in early September, 1919, to investigate damages and outrages suffered by United States citizens in Mexico. Over the next nine months, the Committee heard hundreds of witnesses testify to the chaos that had existed in Mexico since the overthrow of Porfirio Díaz. Witness after witness, many of whom had profited under the Díaz regime, attested to the benefits of his rule. The Committee, and Senator Fall in particular, made it apparent from the questions they asked that they were predisposed against Mexico; that Mexico was on trial.

The Fall Committee announced its recommendation for procedures toward Mexico on May 28, 1920, four days after the Mexican Congress chose De la Huerta as interim president. It urged that recognition be delayed until the new administration could prove that it

is possessed of the stability to endure and the disposition to comply with the rules of international comity and the obligations of treaties.<sup>24</sup>

If the Mexican government could prove its ability to protect

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<sup>24</sup> Investigations of Mexican Affairs, Preliminary Report and Hearings of the Committee on Foreign Relations,

American lives and property, the Committee recommended recognition with the condition firmly stated that Articles 3, 27, 33, and 130 of the Constitution of 1917 should not apply to United States citizens.<sup>25</sup> The agreement should also provide for a claims commission and a boundary commission. Once recognition was granted, the Committee proposed that a low interest national loan be made to Mexico to refund the Mexican national debt, and to reorganize and nationalize the army. The Committee recommendations also contained a threat. The Mexican government would be denied recognition if it failed to agree to such terms; in such a case, it should be warned that action would follow every threat to the lives and property of United States citizens in Mexico.

...we will send a police force consisting of the naval and military forces of our Government into the Republic of Mexico to open and maintain open every line of communication between the City of Mexico and every border port of Mexico.<sup>26</sup>

Mexicans, of course, reacted angrily to the report of the Fall Committee and were not soothed when the Republican

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United States Senate pursuant to S. Res. 106 directing the committee on Foreign Relations to Investigate the matter of outrages on citizens of the United States in Mexico, (Washington, 1920), 3369.

<sup>25</sup> See Introduction for Article 3, 27, 130. Article 33 gives the Executive the right to expel foreigners without judicial process.

<sup>26</sup> Investigations, 3373.

Party announced that the recommendations would be included in its platform.<sup>27</sup>

The United States had recognized the Carranza government in October, 1915, but after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1917 numerous incidents involving interpretation of the Mexican statutes generated demands for a withdrawal of recognition. This was not done, but the questionable legality of the Agua Prieta rebellion allowed the United States to withdraw from a troublesome position by the simple expedient of withholding recognition.

The most vexing incidents revolved around the interpretation of Article 27, which nationalized the subsoil. Article 14 of the Constitution specifically forbade the enactment of retroactive laws, but Carranza indicated in July, 1918, that the government would resume proprietary rights to the subsoil. He imposed royalties and ground rents, and increased petroleum export taxes. The foreign oil companies complained they could not make a profit, and applied pressure to their home governments. In the United States, there were demands for intervention, but Wilson refused to intercede. The companies had appealed to the Mexican courts and the cases were still pending when De la Huerta took office.

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<sup>27</sup> Excelsior (Mexico City) June 4, 1920.

Although the judiciary was established as a separate branch of the Mexican government, in practice it was subject to the executive's influence. Hence presidential interpretation would determine any court decision relative to Article 27. De la Huerta signified to the press that he would interpret the Article in a liberal spirit in order to establish its true meaning, and alluded to the constitutional prohibition of retroactive laws.<sup>28</sup> The statement to the press meant little. The foreign petroleum interests asked for the cancellation of all Carranza decrees affecting the industry and for the right of unrestricted exploration. General Treviño, the Minister of Commerce and Industry, denied that he had authority to discuss the decrees. Several days later he flatly refused to grant any concessions on the decrees.<sup>29</sup> The government also threatened to shut down wells if the export taxes were not paid up to date by August 31. The companies protested but paid.<sup>30</sup> Final disposition of the court cases was not made until 1921 and 1922 when the court declared that Article 27 should not be interpreted as retroactive.

De la Huerta realized that United States recognition was vital to the survival of any Mexican government, but he believed that recognition should be freely given without

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., June 20, 1920. <sup>29</sup> Times, June 24, 1920.

<sup>30</sup> Current History, XIII No. 1 (October, 1920), 106.



any prior agreements between the two states. Mexico should not have to beg for recognition.

Fernando Iglesias Calderón, designated as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, arrived in Washington on June 29, 1920, with instructions from De la Huerta to discuss only the situation in Baja California. Iglesias Calderón quickly disregarded his instructions. In an interview with Under-Secretary of State Norman H. Davis, Iglesias Calderón stated that he wanted to give him information on the state of affairs in Mexico with a view toward establishing friendly cooperation and official relations.<sup>31</sup> Then in mid-August the Mexican press published the alleged United States prerequisites for recognition; the protection of lives and property of United States citizens, indemnity for damages, and the revocation of confiscatory laws.<sup>32</sup> The Secretary of State notified the Mexican government that it had made no promises to Iglesias Calderón, and the Mexican Foreign Minister replied that Iglesias Calderón was not authorized to receive promises anyway.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Memorandum of Under-Secretary of State Davis of June 30, 1920, interview with Fernando Iglesias Calderón, FR: 1920, 174.

<sup>32</sup> Telegram from Chargé to Secretary of State, August 17, 1920, FR: 1920, 177.

<sup>33</sup> Telegram from Secretary of State to Chargé, August 18, 1920, FR: 1920, 177; Telegram from Chargé to Secretary of State, August 19, 1920, Ibid.

Davis and Iglesias Calderón conferred several times in August and September. Davis emphasized to him that the continuation of the petroleum policies of Carranza would complicate further relations and would retard confidence in Mexican ability and willingness to fulfill international obligations.<sup>34</sup> Iglesias Calderón asserted that De la Huerta wanted to remove any obstacle to friendly relations, and that the President realized that a final interpretation of Article 27 was essential. He asked if the revocation of the Carranza decrees would be satisfactory, to which Davis replied that such would permit reoccurrence of decrees of the same nature. A definitive explanation of Article 27 was necessary.<sup>35</sup>

Shortly after the Mexican presidential elections in September, 1920, the United States Chargé in Mexico City conversed with President-elect Obregón who informed him that Iglesias Calderón would soon be recalled; therefore, it was not necessary to enter formal negotiations with him. Obregón thought that recognition of the De la Huerta government would be gratifying, but intimated that it was not a necessity. The Chargé added that it was his personal opinion

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<sup>34</sup> Memorandum of Under-Secretary of State Davis of conversation with Fernando Iglesias Calderón on August 24, 1920, FR: 1920, 178-179.

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum of Under-Secretary of State Davis of a conversation with Fernando Iglesias Calderón on August 30, 1920, FR: 1920, 180.

that Obregón would like recognition extended on his inaugural day.<sup>36</sup> He was to be disappointed.

Iglesias Calderón conferred with Senator Fall later in September. Fall insisted that in order to gain recognition, Mexico must sign a treaty prohibiting the passage of laws which would molest United States citizens or their interests. Iglesias Calderón protested that Mexico could not accept such a condition, and reminded Fall that Mexico had the right to make her own laws without the approval of other nations. The Senator arrogantly declared that without the treaty there could be no resumption of relations and boasted that the United States could well do without Mexico. Then he showed the Ambassador a draft treaty with Colombia similar to the one Mexico refused to sign.<sup>37</sup>

Fall's phrases became official United States policy in October when Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby announced the conditions for recognition. The conditions affirmed the Fall demands for a prior treaty which would establish a claims commission to adjudicate the claims of foreigners, retract the confiscatory and retroactive laws, and assure payment of foreign obligations.<sup>38</sup> No Mexican government could yield to those demands and survive.

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<sup>36</sup> Chargé to Secretary of State, telegram, September 13, 1920, FR: 1920, 182.

<sup>37</sup> Taracena, Séptima etapa, 73.

<sup>38</sup> Times, October 30, 1920.

Iglesias Calderón returned to Mexico City and reported the results of his trip to De la Huerta. After receiving the report, De la Huerta sent a circular telegram to all Mexican embassies affirming Mexico's opposition to the renewal of relations based on a prior treaty with specific conditions.

Our attitude is based on morality and right shall be the only guarantee offered for considering our Republic to be in harmony with the civilized people of the earth.<sup>39</sup>

Although De la Huerta would not agree to a prior treaty, he did make an effort to remove one of the obstacles to recognition. A decree issued September 4, 1920, amplified the terms for reclamations by foreigners and their right to solicit indemnifications.<sup>40</sup> The Decree of September 13, 1920, publicized a previous Carranza law on reclamations and extended the period covered to include damages incurred during the Agua Prieta rebellion. The decree permitted foreigners to seek indemnification before a projected Mixed Claims Commission as well as the National Commission of Reclamations which had only Mexican members.<sup>41</sup>

De la Huerta's government had no more success in

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<sup>39</sup> Chargé to Secretary of State, telegram, copy of circular telegram, November 6, 1920, FR: 1920, 193.

<sup>40</sup> Aarón Sáenz, La política internacional de la Revolución, Estudios y Documentos, (Mexico, D. F., 1961), 45.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 81-83.

gaining recognition in Europe than it had with the United States. As Mexico's confidential agent successively to England, France, Belgium, Italy, and Spain, De la Huerta appointed Félix P. Palavicini, an anti-Obregón journalist, one of the few Mexican journalists to support the Allies during World War I. Obregón accepted him as an agent because he considered he would be acceptable to the Europeans. Palavicini's mission could not be termed successful. England, France, and Belgium insisted that action be taken on the claims of their citizens before they would advance recognition. Spain and Italy were friendlier, but did not extend recognition.<sup>42</sup>

De la Huerta's diplomatic and domestic attainments stand small next to those of the succeeding Revolutionary governments. Yet he functioned as he was expected to function; as an interim president. Nothing spectacular was expected of him; he was to convoke elections and fill an annoying time gap.

After Carranza's death, Obregón found himself without opposition in the presidential campaign until the National Republican Party and the Catholic Party nominated Alfredo Robles Domínguez. There never was any doubt about the outcome of the race, but Obregón campaigned seriously, making

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<sup>42</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 89-91; Taracena, Séptima etapa, 35-37.

a tour of much of the country. His followers reacted toward Robles Domínguez much as they had toward Bonillas. Although his revolutionary reputation was widely known, he was maligned with aspersions.<sup>43</sup>

De la Huerta ordered congressional elections held on August 1 and presidential elections to be held September 5. Just prior to the presidential election, partisans of Robles Domínguez complained to De la Huerta of the partiality shown by some authorities and a part of the vote tabulators. De la Huerta named three trusted friends to oversee the counting of the votes. When Obregón learned of his actions, he demanded the reason for the appointment. De la Huerta informed him that he required an accurate tabulation of the voting, then infuriated Obregón by declaring that the election count must show that he had won or he would not entrust the presidency to him.<sup>44</sup>

Election day, September 5, 1920, was so uneventful that a New York Times observer reported it as "Mexico's first peaceful election."<sup>45</sup> The election results were exactly as expected, although the declaration of the results was delayed until late October. In a light vote Obregón received 1,131,751 votes against a total of 49,797 for all of his opponents.

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<sup>43</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 86.

<sup>44</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 181; Taracena, Séptima etapa, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Current History, XIII No. 1 (October, 1920), 105.

The honesty of the election in Tabasco and Tamaulipas might be questioned: In neither state did Obregón's opposition receive a single vote.<sup>46</sup>

By the end of November, 1920, Mexico appeared to be a country at peace. For the first time in many years, trains ran without escorts. Mexico had not gained diplomatic recognition; she had not made great advances in her land program; no comprehensive labor law had been passed; her educational needs had not been met; and her financial condition, if not much better, was at least not worse. But she was as peaceful as she had ever been. De la Huerta had guided Mexico's first hesitating steps along the path defined by Obregón; now Obregón must lead. Three minutes past midnight on December 1 he took the oath of office.

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<sup>46</sup>Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 86.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN THE OBREGON ADMINISTRATION

As soon as Obregón knew beyond doubt that he would be the next president of Mexico, he asked De la Huerta to act as his minister of finance. De la Huerta refused, preferring to return to Sonora where he was still governor, but Obregón insisted that his administration needed men who demonstrated ability such as he had shown. De la Huerta yielded.<sup>1</sup> That most critical ministry tested his talents and energy to their limits during the following three years. The administration would stand if it surmounted Mexico's financial problems; it would fall if it could not.

The Obregón government inherited an economic disaster born of seven years of revolutionary turbulence. Mexico's lifeline, the railroad system, had deteriorated under neglect and deliberate vandalism. Agriculture, where the fields were not entirely abandoned by men gone to play at soldiering, reeled under pillaging, crop destruction, and the confiscation and slaughter of cattle by both revolutionaries and bandits. Food prices rose from the resultant scarcity. All industry stagnated, depriving many of their only means of sustenance. The mining industry lagged under a shortage of transport and labor and an overage of taxes, but the needs of World War I

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<sup>1</sup> Adolfo de la Huerta, Memorias de don Adolfo de la Huerta. Transcrito y comentario por Roberto Guzmán Esparza (Mexico, D. F., 1957), 182.



revived that all-important industry and production soon reached an all time peak.

The weakness of Mexico's war-wracked banking system complicated hopes for economic recovery. A majority of the banks had collapsed under seven years of government and rebel looting. The few survivors, having learned bitter lessons from the revolutionary turmoil, charged interest rates on their small capital commensurate with their risks while business suffered. The unbacked paper money issued by all factions depreciated almost instantaneously, and creditors accepted only metallic currency with any assurance. Foreign investors, made wary by losses, refused to chance further losses in the Mexican maelstrom.

The blatant corruption of the Carranza administration, its inability to maintain order, and its disregard for the welfare of its citizens cost the administration the confidence of the people. More important for Mexican survival, it destroyed international good-will.

Obregón took office during the post-World War I economic depression which hindered Mexico's efforts at recovery. Metal prices fell abruptly in 1920, followed by mine closures. The value of agricultural exports dropped as European agriculture recovered from the war. But there were a few bright spots amid the general economic gloom. Petroleum production had expanded in spite of the revolution until it became the most valuable of Mexico's mineral assets.

Petroleum taxes helped offset the loss of mining and agricultural revenues, and petroleum exports kept Mexico's trade balance in the "favorable" column.

Important, too, was the resurgence of hope that walked into the presidential office with De la Huerta, and stayed to become confidence under Obregón. The retirement of the major disruptive elements by De la Huerta promised a return to stability, and Obregón's past record assured his people that he would at least attempt to solve Mexico's problems.

To De la Huerta as Minister of Finance, Obregón left the difficulties of financing his ambitious plans for Mexico. Funds had to be found to pay for lands expropriated for distribution, for the projected educational program, for governmental salaries, for rehabilitation of the railroads, and for the largest expense of all, the army.

In addition to domestic requirements Obregón pledged payment of Mexico's national debt. Interest on her bonded foreign debt had not been paid since 1913, and foreigners had lodged tremendous claims for damages suffered during the Revolution. The debt and claims were major factors in the refusal of the great powers to extend recognition. To gain recognition, the key to his survival, Obregón had to prove Mexico's willingness and ability to meet her obligations.

De la Huerta could rely on several sources to furnish a portion of the required funds. The import and export taxes and the production tax on mining had long been principal

suppliers of government income. However, with the decreased demand for Mexican products and raw materials, a new income source had to be found, especially after a proposed income tax failed to secure Congressional backing late in 1920. De la Huerta turned covetous eyes toward Mexico's most valuable resource, petroleum.

Carranza had imposed a ten percent export tax on petroleum and petroleum products. De la Huerta notified the petroleum companies in January, 1921, of a projected special twenty-five percent export tax on petroleum, petroleum products and gas.<sup>2</sup> The proposed law contained a limitation: all income from the tax would be used to retire the foreign debt. With this inclusion Obregón hoped to relieve creditor pressure on his government by making the petroleum companies responsible for debt payment. That clause afforded no consolation to the affected companies, but despite their protests, the tax became law on June 7, 1921.

A small scale politico-economic conflict ensued. The Harding administration through Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes proved its friendship for United States oil interests. Simultaneously, the producers cut the flow of their wells and threatened to discontinue production entirely. The Mexican government countered with an announcement that companies closing operations would be forced to pay

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<sup>2</sup> Current History, XIII part II (January, 1921), 113.

indemnification to employees thrown out of work. The United States sent warships and marines to Mexican ports.<sup>3</sup>

The pressure on the Mexican government was effective. Representatives of the United States petroleum companies arrived in San Luis Potosí at the end of August to confer with De la Huerta. They sought elimination, or failing that, reduction of the taxes. De la Huerta, acting with Obregón's consent, refused to cut the tax, but softened its impact by allowing quarterly payments in cash or in Mexican government bonds receivable at face value.<sup>4</sup> The bond clause gave the companies a generous tax discount since they currently sold on world markets for \$40.00, whereas their par value was \$135.00.<sup>5</sup>

The maneuver appeared successful. Production resumed and back taxes were paid,<sup>6</sup> but in December the United States companies requested an extension of the agreement until January 25, 1922.<sup>7</sup> That date passed and the companies had

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., XIV (August, 1921), 894-896.

<sup>4</sup> Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, Memoria de la Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público; 22 de mayo de 1920 a 25 de septiembre de 1923 (6 vols., Mexico, D.F., 1960), I, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Woodhouse, "The New Understanding with Mexico," Current History, XVI (September, 1922), 1010-1021.

<sup>6</sup> "Settlement of the Mexican Oil Question," Current History, XV (October, 1921), 170-172.

<sup>7</sup> Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Affairs of the United States: 1921 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1921) (2 vols., Washington, D. C., 1936), II, 50-3.

not paid their taxes due in December. Then the Mexican government officially decreed that the taxes could be paid in Mexican bonds or gold.<sup>8</sup> The companies finally paid the back taxes on the last day of February, paying forty percent of the amount claimed to be due. Most of them paid in gold.<sup>9</sup>

One of the probable reasons for the delayed payment of the oil taxes was the objections to the private agreement between the companies and the government by a group with a long standing interest in Mexican bonds, the International Committee of Bankers on Mexico. The Committee was founded in 1918 by leading investment bankers in the United States and Europe to prepare feasible proposals which could lead to a resumption of debt payments by the Mexican government.

Acting as spokesman for the United States members, Thomas W. Lamont of the House of Morgan received the approval of the United States Department of State for American participation in the group. Secretary of State Robert Lansing was agreeable and complied with Lamont's suggestion that the United States ambassador ask President Carranza to request the formation of the Committee. The request was a diplomatic gesture; moreover, it signified the recognition and approval

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<sup>8</sup> Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1922 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1922) (2 vols., Washington, D. C., 1937), II, 686-692.

<sup>9</sup> "Our Relations with Mexico," Current History, XVI (April, 1922), 177.

of the Committee as a negotiating agency. Carranza acceded to the request, but showed no enthusiasm for the project and made no constructive suggestions to the Committee. Lamont, who was the alternate chairman of the Committee, kept the State Department informed of the Committee's work, and made it clear to his European colleagues that United States policy must guide Committee proceedings.<sup>10</sup>

De la Huerta's private agreement with the oil companies naturally attracted the opposition of those dedicated to recovering their investments in Mexico. Obregón's apparent retreat placed subtle pressure on both creditors and the petroleum companies, and forced the bankers to seek a satisfactory settlement of the debt issue.

Obregón had extended an invitation in February, 1921, to representatives of foreign banking houses to visit Mexico to offer advice and suggestions on how the public debt might be handled.<sup>11</sup> The bankers refused at first, but after the government decided to accept the payment of oil taxes in bonds, thus threatening the value of their clients' holdings, they were suddenly eager to make recommendations.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1920 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1920) (3 vols., Washington, D. C., 1936), III, 230-233.

<sup>11</sup> "Mexico's Prospects of Recognition," Current History, XIV, 533.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Thomas W. Lamont to the Secretary of State, June 27, 1921, FR: 1921, 496.

De la Huerta had suggested that the American section of the International Committee cooperate to form a syndicate to buy the depreciated bonds in the open market and resell them to the oil companies to use for their tax payments. Not surprisingly, the bankers were not cooperative. Lamont protested that scattered Europeans held most of the securities, therefore it would be difficult to acquire significant blocks of the bonds. The bonds had a low market value due to long-defaulted interest. The bankers obviously proposed to protect the face value of their client's bonds and held that the Mexican government had no legal right to reacquire the bonds at the low price suggested in the oil tax agreement.<sup>13</sup>

The banker's objections to the oil tax agreement were expressed in a letter to Secretary of State Hughes in September. In October a delegation headed by T. W. Lamont arrived in Mexico to discuss the issue, but two weeks of negotiations did not alter the Mexican government's position. Although they found no formula for settling the problem of foreign debts, Lamont was impressed by the stability of the Obregón government and publicly hoped that the debts would be paid.<sup>14</sup> De la Huerta opined that some differences were adjusted, but declined to elaborate.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Letter from Thomas W. Lamont to W. C. Teagle, September 19, 1921, FR: 1921, 500-501.

<sup>14</sup> New York Times, October 12, 1921.

<sup>15</sup> Times, October 23, 1921.

After Lamont returned to New York, he continued his correspondence with De la Huerta. In early December he reported to Secretary of State Hughes that the Oil Executives Committee, composed of representatives of companies with interests in Mexico, had informed the Mexican Finance Minister that the American oil companies would be unable to carry out the bond purchase clause of their agreement and would be prepared to pay their taxes in cash. He also informed Hughes that the financial situation had developed to the point that the International Committee had suggested that De la Huerta come to New York for further discussions.<sup>16</sup>

Mexico had achieved a relatively favorable position by March 23 when Obregón authorized De la Huerta to represent the Mexican government at talks with the Committee of Bankers, and to accept "such arrangements that in your concept can be favorable to the interests of our country."<sup>17</sup> The Finance Minister was cautioned to remember Mexico's current economic conditions and that any arrangement must be submitted to the Chief Executive for "ratification or rectification."<sup>18</sup> He was to seek an agreement on the consolidation of Mexico's public debt, on the debts of the railroads, and on an old

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<sup>16</sup> Letter from T. W. Lamont to Secretary of State, December 5, 1921, FR: 1921, 503.

<sup>17</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias. Photocopy of instructions to De la Huerta following page 184.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



issue of bonds which had been used to found an agricultural bank.<sup>19</sup> Informally, the President directed De la Huerta to seek a loan for the establishment of a bank of issue and another agricultural bank. The conferences with Thomas W. Lamont presiding convened in New York on June 2, 1922.

At the first meeting the Finance Minister explained the Mexican economic situation to the assembled American and European bankers. Lamont then named a sub-committee to handle the actual negotiations.<sup>20</sup> During the first few days of discussions, the views of the bankers and Mexico appeared irreconcilable. De la Huerta advised Obregón that the situation was critical and that he planned to break off the talks and return to Mexico. Obregón agreed that it would be better to return without any agreement than to accept one not in harmony with the Mexican position.<sup>21</sup> However, the outlook improved quickly; by the end of the first week, the negotiators reached a basis for an agreement, and a second week cleared up minor points and established the final form for the written agreement.<sup>22</sup>

De la Huerta discovered that a loan would not be so easily

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<sup>19</sup> Edgar Turlington, Mexico and her Foreign Creditors (New York, 1930), 286.

<sup>20</sup> Times, June 3, 1922.

<sup>21</sup> Turlington, Mexico, 286-287.

<sup>22</sup> Woodhouse, "New Understanding," Current History, 1017.

obtained when the bankers refused to consider a new loan until after the agreement was signed. As a result De la Huerta found himself caught in a cross-fire. The bankers demanded acknowledgment and an arrangement for the payment of the old debts, while Obregón felt that Mexico could not firmly commit itself to refunding without a loan on which to stabilize the economy. Obregón did not share De la Huerta's confidence that a new loan could be arranged after the basic agreements had been reached. De la Huerta persuaded the bankers to sign a non-committal statement evidencing their interest in the prosperity of Mexico, and then reassured Obregón that a loan could be arranged. But first, his position must be secured by presidential approval of the agreement.<sup>23</sup>

The compact was signed on June 16, 1922, subject to approval by the President. Through this agreement, the Mexican government recognized a total debt of \$508,830,321. The agreement waived all immediate cash payments on back interest. Overdue coupons were to be deposited with a trustee to be amortized over a forty year period. Payments on current interest on bonds were to begin January 2, 1923, in varying proportions among different bond issues. Mexico agreed to establish a special fund for current interest and to resume full service of the debt on January 1, 1928. The entire proceeds of the oil export tax and a surcharge on the gross

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<sup>23</sup> Turlington, Mexico, 287-288.

receipts of the railroads would be paid into the interest fund. The government agreed to return the railroads, operated by the government since 1909, to private management, and to guarantee the entire railroad debt. The bankers agreed to exclude Huerta bonds that had been used to finance arms that killed Americans and Mexicans.<sup>24</sup>

De la Huerta supposedly negotiated with full powers from Obregón, but the President's signature was necessary for the agreement to be effected. Obregón kept in close touch with each phase of the negotiations and received a copy of the compact immediately after it was signed. But Obregón hesitated to sign it, and his embarrassed Minister had to make excuses for the President's delay.

Obregón stressed that he still doubted Mexico's ability to pay the obligations even if the bankers offered new loans. De la Huerta repeatedly explained to him how the funds would be available from public revenues, and reassured him that loans would be made. Obregón also criticized the inclusion of the railroad debts, but the compact could not be changed because the bankers had departed.

The President's delay upset De la Huerta, and he angrily accused the President of having lost confidence in him. Obregón soothed him with a press release which endorsed his

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<sup>24</sup> Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1922 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1922) (2 vols., Washington, D. C., 1937), II, 686-692.

work and declared the agreement to be fair. The release also stated that the compact needed congressional approval and that acceptance would be delayed until after De la Huerta's return.<sup>25</sup>

Obregón's hesitation was encouraged by Alberto J. Pani, minister of foreign affairs, who had pointed out what he believed to be the weaknesses of the compact. Pani opposed the recognition of the face value of bonds that circulated at a low price in the open market, and the inclusion of the railroad debt. He also doubted Mexico's ability to pay. Calles persuaded Pani not to persist in his opposition, but not before Pani had influenced the President. Obregón finally decided that the possible effect of the pact on attaining recognition by Washington far outweighed its supposed financial defects.<sup>26</sup> He affixed his signature on August 7, 1922. The new Chamber which convened on September 1 followed his suggestion and approved it unanimously; shortly after the Senate gave its endorsement.

With his major objectives achieved, De la Huerta turned to the critical matter of sounding out the United States on recognition, a problem more in Pani's department than his own. This was not a part of the original mission. De la Huerta

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<sup>25</sup> Turlington, Mexico, 292-294.

<sup>26</sup> Alberto J. Pani, Apuntes Autobiográficos, (2 vols., Mexico, D. F., 1950), I, 305-306.

received an invitation from the Department of State to talk with President Warren G. Harding and Secretary of State Hughes. The State Department in extending the invitation informed Obregón that it in no way implied recognition.

Washington received De la Huerta with a motorcycle escort and a "fabulous" reception, which De la Huerta modestly and erroneously attributed to the absence of affairs of great international importance. He had a friendly conversation with Harding, who wanted to meet the man "who had defeated the wolves of Wall Street and the rest of the world..." Then in a two hour interview, De la Huerta and Hughes discussed United States-Mexican differences which prevented recognition. De la Huerta reported to Obregón that Hughes agreed that the United States would not insist on the signing of a restrictive treaty prior to recognition if Mexico had acted to remedy the conditions that had led to such a demand.<sup>27</sup>

The Finance Minister returned to New York to continue talks with the Oil Executives Committee, hoping in vain to secure a loan for \$25,000,000.<sup>28</sup> De la Huerta could not offer the companies the assurances they wanted for protection of their investments.

De la Huerta arrived in Mexico amid accolades from the

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<sup>27</sup> Memorandum of conference between De la Huerta and Hughes, July 18, 1922, FR: 1922, 670-673.

<sup>28</sup> Correspondence from Chief of Division of Mexican Affairs to Secretary of State, July 10, 11, 1922, FR: 1922, 696-699.

people, the press, and the President, and jealousy from his rivals. News of the signing in New York caused several newspapers in the capital to propose that De la Huerta be the next president of Mexico.<sup>29</sup> But Félix Palavicini in El Universal hinted at the jealousy that De la Huerta had earned by his success. He praised De la Huerta for his selfless work in behalf of his country, and remarked that if he were to reach an agreement on recognition there would be a cry for his crucifixion. He noted that De la Huerta's worst battle would be against his friends.<sup>30</sup>

Palavicini had Alberto J. Pani in mind. Pani held a strong but uneasy position in Obregón's administration. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had served the Carranza government as director of the National Railways, Minister of Commerce and Industry; and, at Carranza's fall, was Minister to France. His brother, Camilo, was a close friend of Obregón's.<sup>31</sup>

Obregón invited Pani to join the Agua Prieta movement but he remained loyal to Carranza and resigned his post when he learned of Carranza's death. On learning that Obregón was the true head of the movement, he tried to retract his resignation, but was not reinstated.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Times, June 18, 1922.

<sup>30</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 204-206.

<sup>31</sup> John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico (Austin, Texas, 1961), 60.

<sup>32</sup> José Vasconcelos, El Desastre (Mexico, D. F., 1938),

Pani's return to Mexican politics aroused no enthusiasm among Obregón's cohorts. Calles and De la Huerta, who had both known Pani since 1913, successfully opposed his immediate entry into the cabinet. Pani did not mind; he could be useful to the President outside the government. A series of situations, both important and trivial, deepened the hostility between Pani and De la Huerta.

In his role as unofficial collaborator, Pani convinced Obregón of the necessity for the rehabilitation of the banking system. The Chief Executive commissioned him to investigate the possibilities and to form a comprehensive plan. Pani protested that he would be usurping the functions of the Finance Minister, and Obregón suggested that he work secretly. Obregón told Pani that he had little faith in De la Huerta's abilities in such a difficult matter; that he had named him to the finance ministry as a matter of politics.

Pani prepared his plan and presented it to the President. De la Huerta, who had also devised a banking plan, tendered it at a cabinet meeting in January, where it was received favorably. Obregón then surprised the cabinet by reading and recommending Pani's plan, which was, of course, accepted.<sup>33</sup>

At the end of January, 1921, Obregón offered Pani the

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<sup>33</sup> Alberto J. Pani, Mi Contribución al nuevo regimen, 1910-1933 (Mexico, D. F., 1936), 292-293.

Ministry of Foreign Relations. To calm the protests of De la Huerta and Calles, Obregón swore that the position was temporary. He expected United States recognition within a few weeks, and then Pani would be named ambassador to the United States.<sup>34</sup>

Another irritant to the relations between De la Huerta and Pani involved Pani's brother, Camilo. The Ministry of Communications, headed by Pascual Ortiz Rubio, administered the affairs of the Mexican National Railways. Ortiz Rubio, dissatisfied with the railways director, an opponent of his proposed program for the railroads, and a friend of De la Huerta's, decided to arrange for his replacement. His choice for director was Camilo Pani. The day that Pani was installed, De la Huerta prompted Obregón to transfer the railways to the control of the Finance Ministry. Ortiz Rubio resigned, and Pani was removed after only a two hour tenure. De la Huerta's friend remained as railways director.<sup>35</sup>

As the centennial of Mexico's independence approached in 1921, President Obregón requested that Pani organize a celebration. Pani asked for cabinet collaboration in planning and Obregón requested that his cabinet supply committeemen to aid him. De la Huerta, Calles, and José Vasconcelos

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 267-269.

<sup>35</sup> Alfonso Taracena, La Verdadera Revolución Mexicana, Séptima etapa, 1920-1921 (Mexico, D. F., 1961), 134-135.



replied that their departments had too much work to do to spare anyone. Pani was pleased to be left alone to organize and preside over the festivities. He scheduled parades, banquets, and theatricals, and invited foreign representatives to attend. Vasconcelos opposed the entire project, considering all the money wasted because it did not go into education. De la Huerta also opposed all of the functions except an operatic performance which he arranged.<sup>36</sup>

Before De la Huerta left for New York to negotiate with the bankers, Sir William Wiseman, an English economist, visited him. Pani, he reported, had told him that he, not De la Huerta, would attend the conferences on Obregón's orders. Wiseman had asked Obregón about the statement. The President assured him that De la Huerta would go, and promised to reprimand Pani.<sup>37</sup> Then, prior to the commencement of the conference Pani sent a messenger to New York to approach the bankers individually and prejudice them against De la Huerta. Pani suggested that they reject the Finance Minister's proposals and insist that Obregón send Pani, who would concede more advantageous terms. Sir William Wiseman reported Pani's interference to De la Huerta. After the conferences ended, De la Huerta asked Lamont if the charges were true, and he

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<sup>36</sup> Vasconcelos, El Desastre, 55-58.

<sup>37</sup> Rafael Trujillo, Adolfo de la Huerta y Los Tratados de Bucareli (Mexico, D. F., 1957), 35-36.

confirmed them.<sup>38</sup>

Pani took a jaundiced view of De la Huerta's trip to Washington following his negotiations with the international bankers. The Foreign Minister had been conducting slow and tedious negotiations for recognition since he took office. He resented De la Huerta's intrusion into his domain, especially the Finance Minister's announcement that Hughes had agreed that a prior treaty need not be a condition for recognition. Obregón's cultivation of Pani reveals the first faint trace of the rift that would tragically divide the dominant Sonorans.

On his return to Mexico De la Huerta had to set up machinery to effect the banking convention. The first payment on the bonds was due on April 1, 1923. In January the Mexican government announced that it already had more than enough funds on deposit to meet the payment.<sup>39</sup> Plans were made for a call for the deposit of the bonds, but they encountered difficulties with the language and laws of the seven different countries where the call would be issued.<sup>40</sup> The question of phraseology involved Lamont and De la Huerta in a controversy in the summer of 1923,<sup>41</sup> but by September enough bonds had

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 39-41; Luis Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo (Mexico, D. F., 1924), Appendix, 26.

<sup>39</sup> Times, January 23, 1923.

<sup>40</sup> Times, June 29, 1923. <sup>41</sup> Times, July 9, 10, 1923.

been deposited to make the pact operative.<sup>42</sup> By that time De la Huerta was more concerned with politics than finances.

Presidential elections were scheduled for 1924, and the country expected Obregón to designate a successor. To maintain unity and to continue the Revolutionary program, it was necessary to designate one of his associates. The President narrowed the list down to De la Huerta and Plutarco Elías Calles, each of whom professed to support the other. Obregón at first preferred that they settle the question between themselves, but he soon made it clear that he would support Calles. When Calles announced that he would accept the nomination, the election was over for all practical purposes.

Party alignment at the time of the Calles announcement was not absolutely firm. The National Cooperatist Party (PCN) was divided between support of Calles and De la Huerta. The day after Calles agreed to be a candidate, 152 Deputies vowed their support of the candidacy of De la Huerta.<sup>43</sup> This count was in direct contrast to the conditions of the previous April, when a majority of the Deputies promised their support to Calles in the "Pact of Torregosa."<sup>44</sup> Despite such indicated support, De la Huerta refused to become a candidate.

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<sup>42</sup> Times, September 1, 1923.

<sup>43</sup> Alfonso Taracena, La Verdadera Revolución Mexicana, Novena etapa, 1923-1924 (Mexico, D. F., 1962), 60.

<sup>44</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, Appendix, 3-4. Copy of Pact of Torregosa.

De la Huerta had reiterated that he did not want the nomination, but his declarations did not relieve the pressure from various groups that urged him to run for office. Obregón stated that he wished De la Huerta would not so emphatically refuse; in so doing he was closing all doors behind him. Who would run if anything happened to Calles? To the President as to the politicians, De la Huerta made the same statement: He did not desire to be a candidate. He urged his advocates to give their help to Calles.<sup>45</sup>

At a cabinet meeting in mid-July, Obregón praised De la Huerta's work as Finance Minister. To Miguel Alessio Robles, the Minister of Commerce and Industry, it appeared that the meeting was called only to praise De la Huerta. The reason for the praise may be debated; but apparently Obregón, the most realistic of politicians, foresaw danger from his increasingly disgruntled Minister and attempted to soothe and flatter a threatening temper. De la Huerta said nothing during the meeting, but afterwards, he again declined to run and repeated his support of Calles.<sup>46</sup>

The outlook for Mexico brightened as the presidential term drew to a close. The political concensus gathered peacefully around Plutarco Elías Calles, and on September 1,

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<sup>45</sup> Miguel Alessio Robles, Historia Política de la Revolución (Mexico, D. F., 1938), 337.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 325.

Obregón proudly announced the resumption of diplomatic relations with the United States in his annual report to the Congress. But behind his announcement lay three months of discussions which De la Huerta did not condone; discussions which were one of the sources of the rift which had developed between the President, Calles, and De la Huerta by the time of the report.

In April, 1923, Obregón invited President Warren G. Harding to name two representatives to discuss the differences existing between the United States and Mexico.<sup>47</sup> Undoubtedly Pani had advised him to do so, for the Foreign Minister had just sent a long letter to the Department of State communicating his belief that Mexico had met United States requirements for recognition.<sup>48</sup> Harding accepted the invitation, naming Charles Beecher Warren, formerly Ambassador to Japan; and Charles Barton Payne, formerly Secretary of the Interior, to go to Mexico City. Obregón named his intimate friend, Ramón Ross, Director General of Public Charities; Pani named a well-known lawyer, Fernando González Roa, who was "sufficiently strong to carry all the weight of the conferences."<sup>49</sup>

De la Huerta was in Sonora settling state business

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<sup>47</sup> Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1923 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1923) (2 vols., Washington, D. C., 1938), II, 532.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Pani, Apuntes Autobiográficos, I, 307-308.

preparatory to yielding his governorship when he read in the newspapers of the impending conference. He immediately protested to the President. Mexico, he said, should not submit to an interpretation of the validity of her laws by an arbitral commission. He reminded Obregón that Secretary of State Hughes had agreed that no previous treaty would be required for recognition if Mexico had satisfied three requirements: the settlement of the public debt, the confirmation of petroleum rights, and payment for lands taken under the agrarian program.<sup>50</sup> De la Huerta did not remind the President that early in 1921 when the United States had proposed a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce as a pre-condition for recognition, he and Calles had advised him to reject the proposal, and he had agreed.<sup>51</sup>

Obregón answered De la Huerta's objections by claiming that the commissioners were to meet only to exchange impressions and refer them to their proper authorities. When the President asked De la Huerta to return to the capital, he affirmed his faith in Obregón's ability to handle foreign affairs, but repeated that a prior treaty was not necessary.<sup>52</sup>

From the viewpoint of the United States, the essence of

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<sup>50</sup> Aarón Sáenz, La política internacional de la Revolución, Estudios y Documentos (Mexico, D. F., 1961), 190-191.

<sup>51</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 217-218.

<sup>52</sup> Sáenz, La política internacional, 191-195.

the problem lay in Mexico's willingness and ability to protect the lives and investments of United States citizens in Mexico. There could be no recognition until the nations agreed on a method by which Mexico could fulfill United States demands. Obregón's problem can be simply stated: he had to secure recognition before the turbulence of the coming elections brought about a revolutionary atmosphere in Mexico; and recognition must not so compromise the sovereignty of Mexico that it itself could lead to a revolution.

When De la Huerta returned to Mexico City, Obregón inquired how he would treat with the commissioners. De la Huerta suggested that Warren and Payne be treated with courtesy as two journalists come to inquire into the Mexican situation, and that Obregón explain to them the reasoning behind Mexican laws. Let Pani entertain them, then send them away.<sup>53</sup> There was no clear meeting of minds.

The conferences convened on May 14, 1923, at 85 Bucareli Street from which the conference took its name. At the first meeting the commissioners decided that daily minutes would be kept of points which indicated progress, and that each would receive a copy of the minutes. De la Huerta would have objected to much of the work of the commissioners, but the cabinet ministers received little information during the

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<sup>53</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 219-220.

conference.<sup>54</sup>

De la Huerta's only participation in the conference was in his old role of conciliator. When the United States commissioners threatened to leave Mexico after an insulting attack by a tipsy Ramón Ross, Obregón appealed to De la Huerta to soothe the wounded American feelings and save the conference. De la Huerta protested that he had never favored the conferences, but after Obregón reassured him that there would be no protocol or memorandum signed to compromise the Mexican position he acceded to the plea. He contacted Warren and Payne, heard their complaints, and spoke to the offending Mexicans. The conferences resumed with a handshake.<sup>55</sup>

As a result of the conferences the commissioners agreed to the formation of two mixed claims commissions; a General Claims commission to adjudicate claims originating prior to the Revolution, and a Special Claims commission to evaluate damages originating in the Revolution. In addition to the Claims Conventions, the commissioners approved an "unofficial pact" which consisted of the minutes kept of the meetings. In those minutes the commissioners stated their respective positions on the other irritants to Mexican-United States relations and reached a compromise which each was willing to

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<sup>54</sup> Alessio Robles, Historia Política, 341; Taracena, Novena etapa, 61.

<sup>55</sup> Alessio Robles, Historia Política, 349-358.



accept. Included were discussions of the retroactive interpretation of Article 27, and the expropriation of agrarian properties for redistribution.<sup>56</sup> The unofficial pact was not publicized.

The commissioners signed the conference agreements in mid-August. De la Huerta, who had been assured that nothing would be signed, rushed to see the President. Obregón calmed him by asserting that the only thing signed were "some minutes in order that they will result in similar declarations that are going to be made here and in the United States."<sup>57</sup>

De la Huerta suspected that Obregón was not telling the whole truth and began an independent study of the Bucareli minutes. At first he found little to protest, but as he read further, his anger grew. The sections touching Article 27 and agrarian expropriation convinced him that the agreements amounted to the restrictive treaty for recognition which he had so ardently opposed. He protested again to Obregón. Obregón answered that he did not want to pass into history without recognition by civilized countries. De la Huerta insisted that the Bucareli agreements flaunted the law of the country, and accused the President of treason. Obregón replied, "Well, that is your opinion, but not mine nor that

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<sup>56</sup> Robert Glass Cleland, ed., The Mexican Yearbook, 1922-1924 (Los Angeles, 1924), 115-121. Letter from C. E. Hughes to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, January 15, 1924.

<sup>57</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 222.

of the people who have made these arrangements with me."<sup>58</sup> De la Huerta declared he would resign rather than be an accomplice to such actions, then tendered his resignation orally. The foregoing occurred on August 15. The next day, the President called to ascertain whether he had acted from an anger inspired by personal hate or by something more. Did he really believe that the signing of the agreements was treasonous? De la Huerta vowed that it was not personal hate that caused him to reprove the President. Obregón persuaded De la Huerta to wait until November to publish his resignation so as not to upset the government's equilibrium. De la Huerta promised.<sup>59</sup>

Prior to the signing of the Bucareli agreements, another incident had occurred which contributed to the rift between the President and De la Huerta. Pancho Villa was murdered on July 20 in Parral, Coahuila, as he drove into town with several of his friends. The country viewed the death as a political assassination, and the handling of the case indicated that the instinct was correct. All of Mexico knew of Villa's friendly relationship with De la Huerta, and the retired bandit had publicly stated that he would support the Finance Minister if he decided to run for the presidency. Many in Mexico believed that he had signed his own death warrant with

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 220-234; Taracena, Novena etapa, 82-83.

those words.

Opponents of the administration suspected that President-designate Calles had a hand in the assassination. Recriminations and accusations against him in the Chamber of Deputies and pressure from De la Huerta forced Obregón to consent to an investigation of the murder. Evidence proved that Jesús Salas Barraza, a Deputy in the Durango state legislature, had instigated the crime. It also appeared to link Calles with the murder. The evidence was subsequently burned under mysterious circumstances. Salas Barraza confessed his role as planner and received a twenty year prison sentence, but Obregón arranged his freedom in April, 1924.<sup>60</sup>

If De la Huerta still nourished presidential ambitions, the death of Villa hurt doubly for he lost both a friend and a strong political supporter. As a political power in the North, Villa would be feared by De la Huerta's opposition. Because that opposition was Calles he was the logical suspect, and that suspicion must have rankled De la Huerta even if he had no intention of becoming a candidate. Calles, too, was his friend.

Following Villa's assassination and the signing of the Bucareli agreements, the festering dissatisfaction that had hidden beneath a surface of political unanimity burst through to spread the infection that commonly resulted in rebellion.

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<sup>60</sup> Pere Foix, Pancho Villa (Mexico, D. F., 1960), 259-265.

At the presentation of the annual presidential message to Congress on September 1, De la Huerta read the section dealing with his ministry. The ovation given him by his congressional supporters was as noisy as Obregón's. In the traditional response to the presidential report, Jorge Prieto Laurens, President of the Congress, angered the President when he accused him of scheming to impose a candidate on the country. Congress greeted his statement with loud applause. Then at a dinner that evening, an embarrassed De la Huerta apologized to Obregón for the rudeness of his congressional partisans. The provoked President answered with a slighting remark that irritated De la Huerta. Obregón might also have expected a public apology from his Finance Minister, but if he did he was disappointed.<sup>61</sup>

Calles officially accepted candidacy on September 5 in a speech in which he pledged complete support of the policies of Obregón.<sup>62</sup> De la Huerta responded by proposing that he launch a clearly defined program and indicate who would be in his cabinet. Calles' non-committal answer proved to De la Huerta that he could include his old friend among his new enemies.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Alessio Robles, Ideales de la Revolución (Mexico, D. F., 1935), 81-83.

<sup>62</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 184; Taracena, Novena etapa, 109-110.

<sup>63</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 243.

The Finance Minister's increasingly clear disenchantment with Obregón and Calles increased the demands of his congressional partisans that he announce for the presidency. The National Cooperatist Party designated a "Committee for De la Huerta" to handle his publicity. This action caused De la Huerta to give the press another even more emphatic refusal. The De la Huerta Committee telegraphed Calles asking him to persuade the Finance Minister to change his mind, and were answered by callistas seeking their support for Calles.<sup>64</sup> This was the apparent political situation on September 21, when the Sonora Triumvirate divided irreconcilably.

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<sup>64</sup> Taracena, Novena etapa, 111-112

## CHAPTER V

### DESTRUCTION OF THE TRIUMVIRATE

The maneuvers of Obregón and Calles to assure the presidency for Calles in 1924 completed the destruction of the Sonora Triumvirate, with disastrous consequences. Although De la Huerta asserted repeatedly his disinclination for candidacy, Calles and Obregón determined to eliminate any possibility that he might change his mind. The Minister of Finance still had strong support both in the capital and in the states. These forces had to be dismantled before they could be consolidated. Strong opposition could divide the country even if it could not defeat Calles; division could lead to rebellion.

Politicians viewed the gubernatorial elections in San Luis Potosí as an indicator of the relative strength of the nationally significant political factions; the National Cooperatist Party (PCN), the Labor Party (PLM), and the National Agrarian Party. In that contest, Deputy Jorge Prieto Laurens, the strongman of the PCN, faced Aurelio Manrique, Jr., representing the Agrarians. Prieto Laurens had the support of De la Huerta while Calles backed Manrique. In an unfettered election contest Prieto Laurens seemed to hold the balance of power, but as a factor in the national power structure, San Luis Potosí could not avoid

national political pressures. On the national political level Prieto Laurens had vacillated between support of De la Huerta and Calles. He had urged the Finance Minister to be a candidate, but when rebuffed, he had encouraged the cooperatistas to follow Calles.

San Luis Potosí held its elections August 5, 1923, and both candidates claimed victory. Prieto Laurens quickly sought the all-important support of Calles, still Minister of Government, and offered PCN support in return for his aid. Calles verbally agreed that Prieto Laurens had won the elections but refused to intervene because of his position as a presidential candidate. Obregón, too, refused to adjudicate the dispute.<sup>1</sup> For a time the question remained unsolved.

The significant refusal of the President and the president-designate to support him embittered Prieto Laurens against Obregón and Calles. He attacked Obregón before the Congress on September 1, and followed with the same accusations on September 20 at a banquet for De la Huerta. Calles had also incurred his displeasure by declaring that he would allow no party to dominate in Congress. Prieto Laurens interpreted the message as a threat to the De la Huerta PCN majority and became an implacable foe for Calles.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alfonso Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza (Mexico, D. F., 1925), 32.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 51.

De la Huerta was acquainted with the preceding events, although he played no role in the San Luis Potosí elections. He had intimate contacts in the various parties, and his partisans used each perverse action of Calles and Obregón in an effort to reverse his decision against candidacy. They were not to succeed, however, until political squabbles among the Sonorans became deadly hostility.

Obregón precipitated the crisis when he announced on September 21 that the state powers of San Luis Potosí, Nuevo León, and Zacatecas had disappeared, and that he had requested the Senate to establish a provisional government to convoke new elections in those states. His action was legitimate under the Constitution of 1917, but his motivation was strictly political. He intended to insure the states' support of Calles, and politicians, understanding his intent, reacted strongly. Prieto Laurens learned of his announcement before its publication. Since both Obregón and Calles had refused to aid him in the gubernatorial dispute, he was convinced that the President had acted to insure Manrique another chance to win. The adherents of Prieto Laurens took the offensive in the Chamber, attacking all cooperatistas favoring Calles as traitors to the party.<sup>3</sup>

Prieto Laurens, Martín Luis Guzmán, the Vice-President of the PCN, and other party members immediately turned to

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 51-56.



De la Huerta. The Finance Minister was ill with stomach trouble, and professed to be ignorant of the events of the day. Unaware of the strained relationship between De la Huerta and Obregón, they asked the Minister's intercession to prevent Obregón's effecting his resolution. De la Huerta opposed interference, but his friends prevailed.

Obregón was suffering from a headache, and had retired early. De la Huerta insisted on seeing him and was admitted to the President's bedroom. He argued with the President that the federal government could not legally intervene in the elections; the states should resolve the problems. Obregón explained that the orders had been sent; furthermore, his lawyers upheld his actions. De la Huerta countered that he could give him a hundred lawyers that would not. Obregón retorted, "Very well, you listen to yours, I'll listen to mine."<sup>4</sup> De la Huerta realized the futility of his efforts and reiterated his intent to resign. The abuse of the sovereignty of San Luis Potosí added to the despised Bucareli conference was more than he could tolerate.

Obregón believed that De la Huerta's anger would pass, and suggested they discuss the question calmly and coolly the next day. He again extracted the Minister's promise to delay

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<sup>4</sup> John W. F. Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico (Austin, Texas 1961), 190.

publication of the resignation. De la Huerta returned home and reported to his waiting friends what had happened. The following day the headlines of El Mundo, which Martín Luis Guzmán owned, published the "unverified rumor" of De la Huerta's resignation.

The publication of the rumor brought newsmen swarming around the Finance Minister. To their incessant inquiries he replied that he had requested a sixty day leave of absence because of health. But the same day he notified Alberto J. Pani that he would recommend Pani as Finance Minister if he would not treat him as an enemy and would let him remove his papers from the ministry. He contacted Pani because he was aware that Obregón favored him as a replacement.<sup>5</sup>

De la Huerta ignored Obregón's first plea for an explanation of an apparent breach of faith. Some days thereafter De la Huerta consented to answer the President's request. The discussion between Obregón and De la Huerta has remained a subject of controversy among partisans of both men. Obregón vowed at the time that talk centered on his position relative to San Luis Potosí; that it was

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<sup>5</sup> Luis Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo (Mexico, D. F., 1924), Appendix, 13-14; Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 69-75; Adolfo de la Huerta, Memorias de don Adolfo de la Huerta, Transcrito y comentarios por Roberto Guzmán Esparza (Mexico, D. F., 1957), 231-232.

impossible to convince De la Huerta of the rightness of what he had done.<sup>6</sup> De la Huerta remembered that discussion involved his proposal that he go to Washington to analyze Mexico's position for Charles Evans Hughes. Obregón had agreed and invited him to Jalisco with him to prepare for the mission.<sup>7</sup> Since both subjects were irritants to their relationship, it is probable that both were argued and each man emphasized the one he felt to be most important. De la Huerta refused to withdraw his resignation, and submitted it in written form, but both decided that he should delay its publication. To their surprise, the resignation appeared in banner headlines in El Mundo the following day, September 25, 1925.

Before De la Huerta left for the meeting with Obregón, he dictated his resignation to Froylán Manjarrez, who had briefly served as his private secretary in Sonora. He took one copy to present to Obregón; the other, he left on his desk at home. As De la Huerta departed, Martín Luis Guzmán arrived and stayed to visit with Manjarrez. Guzmán found the copy where De la Huerta had left it, and knowing a story when he saw it, published the resignation. De la Huerta and the President, neither knowing what had occurred, each blamed

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<sup>6</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, Appendix, 18.

<sup>7</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 233.

that state where one faction had imposed its will by brute force, and he did not think that presidential intervention under such circumstances violated state sovereignty. He advised De la Huerta to reflect, to talk to Obregón, and to withdraw his resignation.

Calles expressed an inclination to withdraw from the presidential race in favor of De la Huerta and avert the ominous division of the Sonora leaders, but his friends dissuaded him because of De la Huerta's adamant refusals.<sup>10</sup> He continued campaigning; then from Yucatán, he proclaimed a break with De la Huerta. His sudden public announcement resulted from talks with Obregón and Alberto J. Pani. The talks evidently centered around an extremely unfavorable report on conditions in the Finance Ministry which Pani had just prepared for Obregón. Calles must unequivocally dissociate himself from De la Huerta prior to publication of the defamatory report. He offered a belated explanation that the ex-Finance Minister had proved disloyal to the administration and had been hostile to his campaign.<sup>11</sup>

The Calles declaration opened flood gates of rhetoric in the National Chamber. In vitriolic tirades the De la

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 19-23.

<sup>11</sup> Alfonso Taracena, La Verdadura Revolución Mexicana, Novena etapa, 1923-1924 (Mexico, D. F., 1962), 123-125.

the other for the premature publication. Obregón furiously canceled the trip to Jalisco and accepted De la Huerta's resignation. He promptly appointed Alberto J. Pani as Finance Minister.<sup>8</sup>

Relations between De la Huerta and Calles had not been broken. Neither had any significant reason for personal animosity, and Calles refused to believe friends who were suspicious of De la Huerta's refusal to stand for the presidency. On September 25 De la Huerta reported the conflict with Obregón and his resignation to Calles. He did not mention the Bucareli matter, only the immorality of the President's actions toward San Luis Potosí and Nuevo Leon. "If I leave my post, it is because I have defended the sovereignty of Sonora. Today I firmly believe that an analogous error has been committed."<sup>9</sup> He added that he was suffering from acute nervous exhaustion induced by his official work and the painful existing situation.

Calles answered that he believed De la Huerta's conduct resulted from his illness, but he did not believe that De la Huerta should criticize the President regarding the election in Nuevo León. Calles had observed the problem personally in

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<sup>8</sup> Miguel Alessio Robles, Ideales de la Revolución (Mexico, D. F., 1935), 84-87; De la Huerta, Memorias, 234-235.

<sup>9</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, Appendix, 20.

Huerta partisans accused Calles of plotting Villa's assassination and Calles' partisans accused the ex-Finance Minister of gross financial mismanagement. The political object of the battle was to win control of the Permanent Commission of the Congress which was the instrument for the domination of the Congress. Following the election, the Congress canvassed the vote. Control of the Permanent Commission thus could determine the presidency.

Obregón added fuel to the congressional conflagration with the issuance of remarks on a report prepared by Pani on the country's financial condition. The President emphasized that Pani had received the Ministry in a condition of material bankruptcy because his predecessor had expended funds without the President's authorization.<sup>12</sup>

Pani had given the report to Obregón in Jalisco on October 7. The President had not intended to publish the report. Pani told him, however, that he was not disposed to assume the burden of De la Huerta's maladministration and that if the report were quashed, Obregón's opposition would force him to resign. Calles concurred with Pani, and the President readily consented to the publication if it were preceded by an explanation that his ex-Finance Minister

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<sup>12</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, Appendix, 20.

had concealed the bankrupt condition of the country from him.<sup>13</sup> The Pani report seems to have been far more political than financial.

By the date of publication, Obregón had more reason to desire the humiliation of his former Minister. Although De la Huerta had made no public statement, Obregón knew that he would be a candidate for the presidency. The rupture between Calles and De la Huerta became an open break as a result of the Pani report. De la Huerta's popularity was obvious after a mammoth public rally for him on October 14, when 25,000 people filled the Zócalo shouting for De la Huerta and against Calles. The publication of the presidential remarks brought the political war into the open.

The new Finance Minister made a number of grave charges that he had found the nation's finances in a deplorable condition. The accounts showed an existing deficit of 41,000,000 pesos and the deficit was growing at the alarming rate of 3,000,000 pesos per month. This growth was due to a systematic mismanagement in the form of gifts and gratuitous salaries to excess personnel. The money intended for payment of the debt under the Lamont-De la Huerta agreement had been spent by the Mexican Financial Agency in New York without the knowledge of the President and Pani doubted that

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<sup>13</sup> Albert J. Pani, Mi contribución al nuevo regimen, 1910-1933 (Mexico, D. F., 1936). 300-301.

the country would be able to make the payment on the public debt. De la Huerta's Ministry had subsidized the newspaper El Mundo, had paid various sums to railway workers, and had wasted 6,000,000 pesos annually on 1800 extra employees who were De la Huerta's propaganda agents. Pani recorded that other departments also paid excess employees, but few in comparison to the number found in the Finance Ministry. To overcome the critical shortage of funds, Pani proposed reducing the government labor force, a salary reduction, and reorganization of the public services.<sup>14</sup>

The Pani report did not surprise De la Huerta. He knew that Pani had ordered two employees of the Ministry, one an accountant and the other the chief clerk, to prepare a false report on financial conditions. The accountant filed a true report and was fired. The chief clerk told De la Huerta he would resign rather than submit a false report, but De la Huerta advised him to make the report. He had worked hard to achieve his departmental rank; moreover, if he did not make the report someone else would. Added to the existing bitterness between himself and the administration the accusing report forced De la Huerta to the hard decision. To counter the effects of the report and to salvage

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<sup>14</sup> Alberto J. Pani, Memoria de Hacienda y Crédito Público correspondiente 1923-24-25 presentado al Congreso de la Unión (Mexico, D. F., 1926), I, 13-17.



his reputation he offered himself as a presidential candidate, knowing that candidacy afforded protection and a chance to answer Obregón's attack. On October 19, the day the Pani report was published, De la Huerta announced his candidacy.<sup>15</sup>

De la Huerta's announcement and his rebuttal to the Pani charges filled the capital newspapers the next day. He criticized the political motivation behind the public accusations, and reminded the nation that he had successfully handled its finances for three years. To the charge that funds for the debt payment were insufficient and had been misused, he explained that he was arranging a loan with a petroleum company to cover the New York shortages. Income from petroleum export taxes for the remainder of the year should suffice to pay the debts. In the same column, De la Huerta exposed Pani's interference in his negotiations with the New York bankers. He concluded by promising more sensational disclosures "if my head is not separated from my body as was Francisco Villa's."<sup>16</sup>

De la Huerta continued to expand his denial of Pani's charges, clarifying in detail the reasons for his actions as Finance Minister. In November, he ably defended himself in an inquiry before the Senate. Other charges were

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<sup>15</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 235-236.

<sup>16</sup> Taracena, Novena etapa, 134.

hurled by partisans of the administration, but De la Huerta had an answer for each.

De la Huerta's friends reproached the President for his accusations. To one of those friends, Obregon proposed that De la Huerta select a jury of five persons to hear their respective reasons for the quarrel. The jury could judge if the quarrel were justified. De la Huerta received the proposal, but did not accept since he believed the procedure would be useless.<sup>17</sup>

Congressional assaults continued. The cooperatista bloc sustaining De la Huerta assailed the President indirectly by condemnation of General Arnulfo R. Gomez, chief of the Mexico City garrison and an administration partisan, alleging the discovery of a Gomez plot to kill delahuertista Deputies. Gomez counter-accused the PCN of acquiring arms and munitions. Obregon decried the attacks on the national army and vowed presidential protection would be given to the Deputies if they requested it.<sup>18</sup>

Three days after De la Huerta appeared before the Senate he accepted the nomination of the PCN. The acceptance was anti-climatic. De la Huerta's silence throughout the summer had at first helped his cause, but he had delayed so long and refused so often that many of the PCN Deputies had deserted

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<sup>17</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, Appendix, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Taracena, Novena etapa, 141, 146-147.

him to endorse Calles as he had urged. The delahuertista bloc lost adherents daily and by the end of November it became apparent that they could not control the Permanent Commission. His position as an opposition candidate brought him great acclaim but popular acclaim did not win elections. Without the Commission, De la Huerta could not win.

Before De la Huerta made public his acceptance of October 19, he sought to inform Calles of his forthcoming move. He requested a secret meeting with the opposing candidate, but Calles could see no reason for the secrecy, and therefore rejected the conference. Returning to Mexico from a campaign tour, he hoped to speak to De la Huerta, but learned of De la Huerta's reference to the Villa assassination. He quickly inferred that De la Huerta had charged him with complicity. It was equivalent to calling him an assassin, since the Deputies had been saying just that. In this maneuvering for advantage, Calles still hoped that De la Huerta would visit him, but when he did not, Calles made no effort to approach him. De la Huerta resented Calles' not acting to prevent publication of the Pani report, and made no attempt to deflect Congressional charges against him.<sup>19</sup> Heightened tension in the capital almost erupted into violence on October 21, when delahuertistas interrupted a Calles rally.

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<sup>19</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, Appendix 23-26, 36.

Assassination was a common political tool in Mexico and by the end of November De la Huerta was not certain he would live to see the election. The mention of Villa's death, which Calles thought to be a charge against him, originated in a warning given De la Huerta by Obregón at their last meeting: "Careful, friend. I am one of those who prefers that one head rolls rather than a thousand."<sup>20</sup> Through Obregón's nephew, De la Huerta heard that the President had instructed Pani to find a way to picture De la Huerta as a thief and to cause his political death "before the other one."<sup>21</sup> Several attempts had been made on his life, and each of the plots could be linked to General Arnulfo R. Gómez.<sup>22</sup> Gómez had assigned two men to keep De la Huerta under constant surveillance, and the Sonoran was certain they would try to kill him. When he pointed them out to José Vasconcelos, the educator cautioned him: Do not let them force you into a premature rebellion. Keep campaigning. Quit if the risks are too great, but do not start a rebellion.<sup>23</sup> De la Huerta listened, but it was his friends, not his enemies, who pushed him into rebellion.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Appendix, 28.

<sup>21</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 235.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 235-236.

<sup>23</sup> José Vasconcelos, El Desastre (Mexico, D. F., 1938), 277.

It was no secret in Mexico City that the generals were restless. General Enrique Estrada had secretly conferred with other generals in the capital in April, 1922, and revealed to them that he planned to rebel because recent government rulings had limited the jurisdiction of the military chiefs. Among those attending were Generals Guadalupe Sánchez, Fortunato Maycotte, Joaquín Amaro, and Salvador Alvarado. Amaro reported the meeting to Obregón, but the President decided to wait for overt action before moving against them. Obregón sentimentally refused to believe that his old friends could conspire against him.<sup>24</sup>

In spite of his ridiculing the idea of a revolt, Obregón began the transfer of generals among sectors, thus giving them new troops who had no personal loyalty. He also supplied funds generously to the generals to assure their loyalty. But the revolt came just the same. It began quietly enough with a discontented general in Guerrero who promised to be as fair to De la Huerta's partisans as to those of Calles. He was removed from command and futilely rebelled; one by one the anti-callistas were removed from their commands. The beginning movement seems clearly to have been anti-administration rather than pro-De la Huerta.

The cooperatistas worked assiduously among the military

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<sup>24</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, 104-107.

to win support from the enemies of Calles. Generals Fortunato Maycotte, Enrique Estrada, Antonio I. Villarreal, Manuel M. Diéguez, and Salvador Alvarado could be counted in the anti-Calles ranks. The men hated Calles but there was no assurance of their support for De la Huerta, for many had political aspirations of their own. General Guadalupe Sánchez, the chief of military operations of the Department of the East, had never shown political inclinations, and consented to join the cooperatistas. When the cooperatistas ascertained that Sanchez was to be relieved of his command, they decided to precipitate the revolt in order to use his troops.<sup>25</sup>

De la Huerta resisted the idea of armed revolt. He had accepted its inevitability, but opposed hasty action. He also feared for his life. On the night of December 3, after hearing of an elaborate plot designed to kill him and to incriminate the cooperatistas in the revolt movement, De la Huerta reached home to find several of his colleagues there to tell him of more conspiracies.

His brother Alfonso, an agent for General Sánchez, Prieto Laurens and others all advised that he leave for Veracruz before General Gómez executed an order for his arrest. De la Huerta finally judged that flight was his only alternative.

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<sup>25</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 104-107.

He spent the next day hiding in the suburban home of a friend, and the evening of December 4 secretly boarded the train for Veracruz. With De la Huerta was Rafael Zuburan Capmany whose party affiliation had caused trouble with Obregón, and Jorge Prieto Laurens. The party arrived in Veracruz in the early morning hours of December 5, and was greeted by General Sánchez.<sup>26</sup>

An immediate conference among the leaders revealed that all but De la Huerta subscribed to a momentary break with the government and a military revolt. De la Huerta counseled delay in the hope that Obregón might make concessions. The other leaders tried to convince him of the futility of any demands and pressed for the break.<sup>27</sup> De la Huerta believed any action would be premature, but when one of the generals inferred that his hesitation might be due to cowardice, De la Huerta angrily consented to rebellion.<sup>28</sup>

Without the active help of De la Huerta the leaders moved smoothly into rebellion with machinery that was undoubtedly well-oiled by prior planning. The rebels took control of the municipal and federal offices of the city, the customs house and maritime facilities, and all communications.

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<sup>26</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 246-252.

<sup>27</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 95-96.

<sup>28</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 253.

De la Huerta was ignorant of these actions, and was ignored when he opposed the removal of railroad tracks to halt traffic from Mexico City.<sup>29</sup> In his first efforts for the rebellion, De la Huerta approached the naval officers stationed in the port and secured their support.

General Sánchez planned to notify all the chiefs in his department of the decision to rebel. De la Huerta warned him that he could not be certain of their support because Obregón had subverted many of them. Sánchez thought that they would follow him; accordingly, he sent telegrams to all garrisons and detachments asking that they disown the government, and adhere to himself, the Navy, and De la Huerta. Sánchez added De la Huerta's name to the telegram without his knowledge.<sup>30</sup> The response to the plea proved De la Huerta's warning to be correct.

As yet the rebellion had no head. The rebels urged De la Huerta to endorse a revolutionary plan which would establish his leadership, but De la Huerta demurred. After considerable argument, he acquiesced on the condition that the lives of all prisoners of war be spared.<sup>31</sup>

De la Huerta alone signed the rebellion's manifesto.

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<sup>29</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 95-96.

<sup>30</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 254.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 253.



The Plan of Veracruz, issued from that city on December 7, 1923, followed the traditional format of all Mexican revolutionary plans. The accusations were reminiscent of the Plan of Agua Prieta with its charges of the violation of state sovereignty to impose a president. Only the names were changed. De la Huerta repeated the charges against Obregón which the Chamber of Deputies had been making for the two preceding months; the plots on the life of the Deputies, the threats and bribes, but he added a new one. Obregón, he declared, sought to impose Calles to assure his own future return to office. The Bucareli agreements were not mentioned.

The constructive program of the Plan pledged fulfillment of Revolutionary aims. It called for legislation to implement Article 123, the labor clause of the Constitution. For agriculture, it proposed the division of the large land holdings among the ejidos, and individual ownership of the property on petition. Expropriated lands were to be paid for in cash, and agricultural loan institutions established to expedite the purchase of lands and equipment to augment agricultural production. The plan also proposed abolition of the death penalty, woman suffrage, and an extended educational program. Governors who aided the imposition of Calles or who did not adhere to the Plan would not be recognized.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Taracena, Novena etapa, 163-167.

To name the rebellion that followed as the "De la Huerta Rebellion" is to assign to him a role which he did not play. De la Huerta was titular head of the rebellion in the East, but the rebellion actually had two very distinct elements, the discontented politicians and the discontented generals. These two groups were further splintered within themselves by personal political ambitions. This personal ambition was the only factor that caused their common dissatisfaction with the central government; it also prevented harmony and unity among the rebels. Both elements ignored De la Huerta except when it was convenient to do otherwise.

Having consented to lead the rebellion, De la Huerta had to organize his government from the discordant factions present in Veracruz. To head the Department of Foreign Relations, he named Juan Manuel Álvarez del Castillo, formerly president of the PCN and Minister to Germany. He appointed Miguel Palacios Macedo, a young intellectual of limited political experience, to handle the Department of Finance over the protests of his associates who did not consider Macedo an ardent rebel.

The naming of the War Minister posed a problem for De la Huerta. He personally favored Guadalupe Sánchez for the post, as did many of his colleagues, but he knew the jealous military chiefs would resent any superior. He resolved the problem by naming no one to the post, thereby

crippling the most critical department of the nascent government.

De la Huerta was disposed to name Rafael Zubaran Capmany as High Commissioner of Government, but feared the reaction of the followers of Prieto Laurens. Zubaran Capmany had for a time headed the Carranza Ministry of Government in which De la Huerta had served, had been Mayor of Mexico City under De la Huerta, and Minister of Industry and Commerce under Obregón. De la Huerta counted Zubaran Capmany as one of his dearest friends and advisors, but Prieto Laurens thought him a bitter political enemy. The crisis over the office solved itself. Prieto Laurens announced that he would be the Chief of the Department of Publicity. De la Huerta then named Zubaran Capmany to head Government. In January he named Francisco Ollivier to head the Department of Communications and Public Works, and General Antonio I. Villarreal as Commissioner of Agriculture and Development.<sup>33</sup>

While De la Huerta organized a government in Veracruz, the rebellion spread, although clearly many of those who joined recognized him only as titular head. General Enrique Estrada was Chief of Military Operations in Jalisco. The governor of that state had suspected that a military revolt was brewing when delahuertista generals assembled in his

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<sup>33</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 111-115.

state at a non-official meeting. He had informed Obregón, but Obregón chose to believe that his close friend Estrada would remain loyal. Had not his old friend recently visited him to obtain money for an elaborate wedding ceremony? When capital newspapers published rumors of an impending revolt in Jalisco Estrada denied them so vehemently that people thought he would be the victim of any plot, not the plotter. Much to the President's surprise, he received a letter from Estrada, dated December 7, in which he declared himself to be in revolt.

Joining Estrada were many figures whose actions in behalf of the Revolution began with its inception, among them Generals Manuel M. Diéguez and Salvador Alvarado. General Alvarado had a personal vendetta with Obregón, as well as political ambitions. All three men adhered to De la Huerta as chief, but Estrada never formalized his adherence.<sup>34</sup>

Obregón had expected trouble from the Governor of Oaxaca, Manuel García Vigil, but never from the man who had saved his life on the flight from Mexico City in 1920, General Fortunato Maycotte. General Maycotte, Chief of the Army of the Center and the South headquartered in Oaxaca, was in Mexico City conferring with Obregón when the rebellion began. He received money and supplies to crush any rebellion in Oaxaca,

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<sup>34</sup> Moreno Ochoa, Semblanzas revolucionarias 1920-1930 (Guadalajara, 1959), 61-78; Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, 269-279.

and returned to the state after swearing fealty to Obregón. Again the President received an unpleasant shock. Maycotte joined García Vigil and the state legislature in signing an independent plan for revolt, the Plan of Oaxaca, on December 13.<sup>35</sup>

Froylán C. Manjarrez governed Puebla in 1923, and as an ardent delahuertista persecuted the callistas in the state. At the onset of the rebellion, he was arrested and replaced with a governor friendly to Calles. Later, callista friends secured his release and he joined De la Huerta. General Antonio I. Villarreal, who controlled strong forces in the state, remained a threat to the callistas.<sup>36</sup>

In San Luis Potosí a former governor of the state seconded the rebellion and led delahuertistas in a battle against the troops headed by Aurelio Manrique. Manrique defeated him and took over the state government with the consent of the federal government. Calles established a general headquarters in San Luis Potosi and organized the state forces.<sup>37</sup>

Several other states evidenced an early interest in the rebellion, but swift action by Obregón kept them loyal.

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<sup>35</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, 356-361; General Juan Gualberto Amaya, Los Gobiernos de Obregón, Calles y regimenes "Peleles" derivados del Callismo (Mexico, D. F., 1945), 36-40.

<sup>36</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, 371-380.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 399-401.

Sonora took no part in the rebellion which was largely confined to the southern half of Mexico. Approximately sixty percent of the nation's military forces joined the rebels, who at the height of their power counted approximately 53,000 men to 44,000 loyal to the government.<sup>38</sup> But the government forces had the advantage of being unified under the command of Alvaro Obregón, who substituted ability for number.

Obregón had quickly organized his government to meet the threat. In a hastily summoned cabinet meeting, the ministers voted him special emergency powers. José Vasconcelos, misunderstanding the nature of the revolt, suggested that the entire cabinet resign and a new cabinet free of suspicion be chosen as a gesture of conciliation to the rebels. The callista members sneered, but the Minister of War offered to resign. Obregón intervened to declare that the conflict was inevitable and no effort should be made to negotiate with the rebels. Calles desired a command, but the cabinet opposed the idea because of his status as a candidate. Obregón directed Calles to recruit troops. At the same time he designated Ramón Ross for a special mission to secure United States support. Obregón decided that he personally would direct the operations against Estrada and chose General Eugenio Martínez

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 112.

to direct the operations in Veracruz.<sup>39</sup>

Obregón realized that the key to the survival of his government lay in the United States' attitude. Obregón needed Senate ratification of the two Claims Convention included in the Bucareli agreements in order to assure United States cooperation against the rebels. The ratification came with difficulty. De la Huerta's flight to Veracruz had not ended the vicious congressional battles although it was evident on December 8 that the administration would control the Permanent Commission. A determined bloc of delahuertistas continued their opposition to the administration. The delahuertistas vowed that the Conventions wounded the national dignity and the country's interests. They would oppose them, not because of partisanship, but because of patriotism, but they could not muster enough votes to prevent the ratification of the Special Claims Convention on December 27.<sup>40</sup>

In blocking the ratification of the General Claims Convention, the minority had more success. Under the leadership of Francisco Field Jurado, who acted on orders from Veracruz, the opposition bloc arranged for absences that prevented the attainment of a necessary two-thirds

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<sup>39</sup> Vasconcelos, El Desastre, 295-297; Miguel Alessio Robles, Historia Política de la Revolución (Mexico, D. F., 1938), 364.

<sup>40</sup> Taracena, Novena etapa, 189-191, 196.

quorum; thus preventing any action on the Convention during the regular session of Congress. In a special Senate session called in January, 1924, they repeated their delaying tactics.

The callistas took drastic measures to secure ratification. On January 14, and January 20, Deputy Luis N. Morones, the powerful callista labor leader, threatened revenge for the recent murder of Felipe Carrillo Puerto at the hands of rebels in Yucatán. He accused Field Jurado of raising funds for the rebels, and promised punishment. Three days later Field Jurado was dead, shot down on the street after he left the Senate. At the same time in other parts of Mexico City three senators were kidnapped.

The Senate seemed little inclined to protest or investigate the death of Field Jurado; finally they did sign an ambiguous and ineffective protest. Obregón's public reaction was fury; he denounced Morones and declared that his government did not want to be associated with such odious acts. Even so, the assassination and kidnappings accomplished their purpose. The kidnapped senators returned, the minority fell in line, and the General Claims Convention was ratified. The killers went unpunished, but Mexico obtained United States assistance.<sup>41</sup>

As Obregón organized his forces, the rebels demonstrated

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<sup>41</sup> Miguel Alessio Robles, Historia Política, 365-401; Roberto Blanco Moheno, Crónica de la Revolución Mexicana (3 vols., Mexico, D. F., 1959), II, 261-275.



their inability to do the same thing. The military phase of the rebellion aptly demonstrates the lack of unanimity among the insurgents. Political intrigues in Veracruz frequently hampered military action and there was no unifying War Department to acquire supplies, coordinate campaigns and plan strategy. The military men and governors acted individually without central direction; thus actions were often haphazard and ineffective.

The opening military move by the rebels in Veracruz was the seizure of Jalapa, the capital of Veracruz state, the day after De la Huerta's manifesto. After taking that city, the rebel troops advanced toward Puebla. The government forces abandoned that strategic city because of the strength of the local rebels who then occupied it. Strong government forces under General Martínez quickly returned to assault the occupied city. The rebel forces advancing from Jalapa were recalled to Veracruz, and Puebla fell to government forces.<sup>42</sup>

The Government of Yucatán, Felipe Carillo Puerto, remained loyal to Obregón as did most of the state military leaders. But enemies of Carillo Puerto's socialist regime overthrew his government and captured the fleeing governor. De la Huerta opposed a military trial for the prisoners and suggested that they be sent to Veracruz. In spite of

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<sup>42</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 223-227.

De la Huerta's demands for protection of the prisoners, Carillo Puerto was tried by military court, found guilty, and together with three brothers and nine friends, was shot in Merida on January 3, 1924.<sup>43</sup>

The deaths emphasize the fragmented nature of the rebellion. Until the overthrow of Carillo Puerto, De la Huerta had not received notice of the adherence of the Yucatecans, nor had Sanchez, who had invited them to join.<sup>44</sup> Carillo Puerto died because his enormous prestige was dangerous to the continued power of local rebels.<sup>45</sup>

Tabasco suffered more than any other state in the conflict. For six months all contact between the state and central government was broken. Delahuertistas besieged the loyal garrison at Villahermosa for a month until the shortage of ammunition forced its surrender. The federal leader then pledged loyalty to De la Huerta, and he and his forces were moved to Veracruz. All other leaders were suspicious of his sudden adherence, but De la Huerta trustingly sent the erstwhile enemies to reinforce rebel positions at Esperanza, Puebla, where Generals Sánchez, Maycotte, Alfonso de la Huerta, and others faced the army of General Martínez. The defenders of Villahermosa contributed to a government victory by turning their fire on the rebels. The victory

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<sup>43</sup> Taracena, Novena etapa, 208-211. <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 208

<sup>45</sup> Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, 459-478.

at Esperanza opened the route to Veracruz for General Martínez.<sup>46</sup>

In the West, Estrada faced Obregón. In one of the first encounters Estrada defeated General Lázaro Cárdenas in Jalisco. His victorious troops then moved to Morelia, Michoacán, to assist General Diéguez in taking that city. After the insurgents marched into an ambush outside Morelia, Estrada took personal command and captured the city.

The withdrawal of Estrada's troop from Jalisco to assist Diéguez weakened that state's defenses. Obregón led an assault on Ocotlán, Jalisco, a rebel stronghold under the command of General Salvador Alvarado. After twenty-four hours of combat in which planes furnished by the United States bombed the defenders, Obregón gained the city. The rebels then deserted Guadalajara, and Alvarado fled to the United States.

Estrada concentrated his forces east of Lake Chapala in the town of Palo Verde where government forces located them and attacked. Estrada called for aid from Diéguez who was nearby, but that General received a false report of Estrada's defeat, and retreated. Estrada was also forced to retreat. With his forces gone Estrada followed Alvarado into exile in the United States.

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<sup>46</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 168-176.

General Diéguez escaped to Oaxaca and persuaded Governor García Vigil to join him in flight. García Vigil surrendered and was shot; Diéguez reached Chiapas but was also taken and shot.<sup>47</sup>

In Oaxaca General Fortunato Maycotte continued to struggle against Obregón. Throughout April, the General dexterously eluded the entire government contingent in the state. At last exhausted, hungry, thirsty, and wounded, he was captured by civilians on the coast. The civilians turned him over to the military and he was shot.<sup>48</sup>

While the rebel military fought their losing battle, De la Huerta was fighting a different kind of battle in Veracruz. Internal political conflicts and intrigues threatened his government in Veracruz from the day of its creation. Unfortunately De la Huerta was too amiable and conciliatory to rise above the petty maneuvers of his associates, and his efforts to maintain harmony impeded the military execution of the rebellion. As those surrounding him vied for political supremacy, he vacillated, torn between his friends on one side, and his friends on the other.

The intrigues against General Antonio I. Villarreal were the most vicious and had the most serious consequences. The General, one of the leaders at Puebla, had been forced

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<sup>47</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, 248-255.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 256-259.

from that city when the rebel reinforcements were recalled. Sánchez had wanted to send troops, but Zubaran Capmany opposed, fearing success on Villarreal's part. If Puebla were held, Villarreal could raise funds and troops to capture Mexico City. Once there, he would be the dominant figure of the rebellion and a threat to the civilians in Veracruz. Villarreal got no reinforcements and the rebels lost Puebla. Villarreal fled to Veracruz and asked for men and transportation in order to move north to encourage rebellion in Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Nuevo León. Instead, he was named High Commissioner of Agriculture and Development and forced into idleness while the Obregón forces chalked up victories. In late January Villarreal resigned and received permission for his northern campaign. It was too late.<sup>49</sup>

De la Huerta's administrative caprices reinforced the division between the Veracruz factions. The naming of Francisco Ollivier as Head of the Department of Communication and Public Works was a logical move, as Ollivier was an engineer. But what followed had no apparent logic. Álvarez del Castillo, Foreign Relations Minister, accepted an assignment in Washington. De la Huerta designated Ollivier to act in his place as Sub-Chief of the Department of Foreign Relations. When Álvarez del Castillo resigned, Ollivier

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<sup>49</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 120-125.

logically should have succeeded him as head of the Department. Illogically, but politically, Zubaran Capmany received the post with the new title of High Commissioner in the Branches of Government and Foreign Relations. The change gave him virtual hegemony in Veracruz and increased jealousy between the factions.<sup>50</sup>

Another hindrance to the rebel cause was De la Huerta's insistence on legality. The customs houses in Veracruz held large stores of merchandise which should have been sold at auction to raise desperately needed funds. For the procedure to be legal, the goods must have been stored for six months. De la Huerta carefully observed the rules for sale and the goods were not sold. His attitude toward other necessities was the same. When horses were needed, they had to be legally bought with the owner willing to sell and receiving his just value. Obregón took the horses his troops needed; when troops had to be moved, he commandeered whatever transport was at hand. De la Huerta worried about whether the drivers were willing to go.<sup>51</sup> Under war conditions, his incapacity for crime was criminal.

The United States did not wait for the approval of the Claims Conventions to support the recognized government in

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 115-116.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 106-109

Mexico. Ramón Ross went to Washington to insure the good will of the United States. The United States would not sell ships to Mexico as Obregón wished, but was willing to sell arms to maintain stability and order. Early in January the United States embargoed the shipment of arms and munitions to any but the recognized government.<sup>52</sup>

De la Huerta's opposition to the Bucareli agreements did not win friends in Washington for his rebellion. A special delegate from the United States visited him in Veracruz desiring to know his attitude toward the agreements. The interpreters counselled De la Huerta not to express disapproval, but to state that the measures were under study. De la Huerta refused, saying that Secretary of State Hughes knew his views anyway. The functionaries lamented his unequivocal reply and stated that they could have promised recognition of belligerency if De la Huerta had accepted the agreements. De la Huerta indicated his belief that the rebellion was an internal conflict, and asked that the United States not meddle.<sup>53</sup> A week later the United States imposed

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<sup>52</sup> Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1923 (2 vols., Washington, D. C., 1938), II, 568; Ibid., 569; Department of State Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1924 (hereinafter cited as FR: 1924) (2 vols., Washington, D. C., 1939), 428.

<sup>53</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 263-265; Taracena, Novena etapa, 199-200.

the embargo.

In addition to embargoing United States shipments, the Department of State requested that Cuba and Central America refrain from selling arms to the rebels, making acquisition of arms virtually impossible.<sup>54</sup> Obregón had unwittingly furnished the material for the first twenty days of the rebel offensive with his favors for the generals. After that, the insurgents were forced to rely on supplies captured in raids on small garrisons.<sup>55</sup> The shortage of arms limited both defense and offense.

De la Huerta was also partly responsible for the arms shortage. He did not act quickly enough to assure a steady source. His insistence on legality forestalled the acquisition of funds to purchase munitions, and when a small sum was finally raised, the purchasing agents took the gold but sent no arms.<sup>56</sup> After the United States embargo and request to Cuba and Central America, the only source of supply was the small country of Belize in the southeastern corner of the Yucatán peninsula, which offered to sell arms. De la Huerta considered the purchase of arms from a foreign government as treason.<sup>57</sup> The rebels got no arms.

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<sup>54</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 261.

<sup>55</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 131.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 161-166. <sup>57</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 261.



The United States-Obregón rapprochement injected another factor into the rebellion. General Cándido Aguilar, the son-in-law of Venustiano Carranza, had been in exile in the United States since Carranza's death. In January he offered his adherence to the rebellion, but made clear that his collaboration expressed antagonism to Obregón's acceptance of United States aid in a civil war rather than support of De la Huerta. Aguilar convinced De la Huerta of the necessity of giving the rebellion a nationalistic character. To that effect he published a manifesto to change the old cry of "Effective Suffrage, no Re-election," to "National Sovereignty and Constitution." With the incorporation of Aguilar into the rebellion, the rebel chiefs assumed the role of "protectors of constitutional order." The conflict was no longer a personal conflict with Calles, but a struggle against the international policies of the Obregón government.<sup>58</sup>

Aguilar had arrived in time to hear the death-rattle of the rebellion, and his efforts at revival failed. The defeat at Esperanza on January 28 was the beginning of the end for the insurgents in Veracruz. When news of the defeat reached Veracruz, De la Huerta ordered the immediate evacuation of the port. Although there were 2,500 troops on hand to defend the city, De la Huerta insisted that it be evacu-

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<sup>58</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 140-144; Taracena, Novena etapa, 215-217.

ated without a battle.<sup>59</sup> Behind the decision lay a United States warning that fighting in Veracruz would lead to United States landings.<sup>60</sup>

The United States had on several prior occasions made clear its intolerance of any menace to United States commerce, and De la Huerta had clearly sought to avoid any international trouble. When rebels declared a blockade of Tampico, the United States opposed the action, and no blockade was effected. When the rebels announced they intended to mine several harbors, the United States protested, and the harbors were not mined. United States cruisers stood by in Gulf ports to assure that United States commerce flowed smoothly, and one in Veracruz stood by to prevent any disruption of communication with Veracruz.<sup>61</sup>

The delahuertistas abandoned Veracruz on February 5, and sailed for Frontera, Tabasco, leaving behind Guadalupe Sánchez and the remnants of his forces, and losing income from import taxes in the important port. Their plight was by no means desperate, because they still controlled the entire Yucatán peninsula, all the warships, two large ports, 6,000 men. The enemy was across the Gulf without any means

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<sup>59</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 167.

<sup>60</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 266.

<sup>61</sup> Communications between the Consul at Veracruz and the Secretary of State relative to the rebel blockade of ports of Tuxpan and Tampico, FR: 1924, 432-436.

of transportation.<sup>62</sup>

From Frontera Cándido Aguilar issued his manifesto, but it came too late. De la Huerta ill and disgusted with his scheming associates, decided he could be more useful to the rebellion in Washington. The generals, possibly to be rid of him, agreed that he might relieve United States pressure. De la Huerta proposed to Aguilar that he take the role of Supreme Chief, but Aguilar refused, not believing the post could be designated. Aguilar finally agreed to function as Interim Supreme Chief during De la Huerta's absence. Then without the knowledge of any but Aguilar, De la Huerta slipped out of Frontera on the night of March 11.

Because he lacked the proper credentials for entrance into the United States, De la Huerta traveled to Cuba where a friend arranged to borrow a passport for his use. Then De la Huerta entered the United States with papers that fooled no one, least of all, the immigration officials. An order was issued for his arrest and deportation, but with the aid of friends, he evaded the authorities. Any hopes of usefulness in Washington vanished.<sup>63</sup>

Before De la Huerta left Frontera, the leaders had indicated their preference of General Salvador Alvarado as

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<sup>62</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 193.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 190-196; De la Huerta, Memorias, 268-272.

Supreme Chief to replace De la Huerta because of his popularity in southeastern Mexico. Alvarado had escaped to Canada after the defeat at Ocotlán. De la Huerta contacted him, and asked if he would accept leadership. When Alvarado agreed, De la Huerta asked if he preferred returning to the Southeast or going to Sonora with him to raise a rebellion there. Alvarado chose to return to the Southeast. De la Huerta suggested that Alvarado tell Águilar to come to the border with his brother, Alfonso, to help him in the north. Then he, too, received a credential naming him Interim Supreme Chief, but his was dated one day prior to Águilar's.<sup>64</sup> De la Huerta did not tell Alvarado that Águilar was functioning as Interim Supreme Chief.

De la Huerta attempted to secure financial aid for the rebellion in New York, but the bankers were not interested in financing a lost cause. He went to Arizona, but had no success in raising men to start a rebellion in Sonora where loyal troops were massed in great strength. All of his travels were made in great secrecy to avoid arrest, and he received mail only through trusted emissaries who alone knew his whereabouts. Prieto Laurens, whose relations with De la Huerta had suffered through the Chief's friendship with Zubaran Capmany, and Zubaran Capmany sought refuge in

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<sup>64</sup> De la Huerta, Memorias, 272-274.

the United States. De la Huerta's secrecy infuriated them, and Zubaran Capmany broke with him and reorganized the rebel government. Circulars and newspapers continued to press the rebel cause until the final military defeat in Mexico.<sup>65</sup>

De la Huerta's departure from Frontera was a blow to the rebel cause. His supporters deserted and fled the country. General Águilar planned to fight until Obregón's term ended in order to fulfill his manifesto, but the navy surrendered shortly after the arrival of General Alvarado and made government victory easier. Alvarado's arrival complicated the situation, but the men agreed to establish separate collaborating commands. The federal government, however, could concentrate its forces in the southeast after the defeat of the rebels in the West. By the end of April, all of Yucatán had been retaken; in June Alvarado was shot by one of his own men, and Águilar was wounded and forced to withdraw from fighting. His column dissolved while he recovered, leaving only small guerilla units in the field. Their leaders were eventually captured and shot.<sup>66</sup>

Thus ended the rebellion. It cost Mexico approximately 70,000,000 pesos in tangible assets, and in lives lost, approximately 7,000. The number of active generals increased

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<sup>65</sup> Capetillo, La Rebelión sin cabeza, 208-209, 213; Monroy Duran, El Último Caudillo, Appendix, 76-145. Correspondence among revolutionaries in exile.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 229-235

again, in spite of the mass desertions to follow De la Huerta and the executions of captured officers. Money for Obregón's projects was diverted into the war; education, in particular, suffered. And the rebellion forced the suspension and renegotiation of the foreign debt payment that De la Huerta had negotiated. It proved to be the last important rebellion and its defeat assured the survival of the Revolution.

## EPILOGUE

From Tucson De la Huerta went to Los Angeles where he taught voice lessons in order to earn a living. If he had mishandled funds as finance minister, they had not found their way into his private finances. He refused to take any part in Mexican politics from exile, although a delahuertista bloc existed in the national Congress throughout the 1920's. General Lázaro Cárdenas, his old friend, became President of Mexico in 1934, and invited political exiles to return. On De la Huerta's return, Cárdenas designated him Supervisor of Consulates, and in that post, he traveled in the United States. De la Huerta later served as Director of Pensions, then again as Supervisor of Consulates under President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines. After his retirement he published and wrote for periodicals until his death in 1955.

## CONCLUSIONS

Adolfo de la Huerta acquitted himself well as governor of Sonora and president of Mexico. In both offices he displayed sympathy for the traditionally ignored classes in Mexico, with laws for the laborer and the farmer. These laws, which many of his contemporaries considered radical, were the products of an idealistic mind, a mind that did not thoroughly grasp the harsh realities of Mexico in the post-World War I era. De la Huerta could sincerely oppose the imposition of Calles because he did not understand that in Mexican politics the president had to designate and support his successor if the Revolution were to live, and a post-electoral bloodbath be averted. The metamorphosis of the violent, militaristic revolution into an institutional phase escaped him. De la Huerta did not advance beyond the personalistic concept of rule.

In his tenure as finance minister he proved himself to be capable and peculiarly for that era, honest. His honesty was conceded by all but his political enemies. His particular strength, which also proved ultimately to be a weakness, lay in his conciliatory ability. He was, as a New York Times article expressed it, a "general fixer"; the man who arranged the compromises and soothed the wounded feelings. Neither Calles nor Obregón could have pacified Mexico following the murder of Carranza in 1920 without further violence.

Against the tough realism of the political game as



played by Obregón and Calles, De la Huerta had no chance of survival. He was politically naive; a man who would believe a friend because he was a friend; one whose determination could be swayed by an appeal to his patriotism. The men who coaxed him into rebellion played on this weakness. Most of them had political ambitions and he, seeing them only as friends, was the tool of their intrigues.

History proved De la Huerta to be the least important member of the Triumvirate; yet when he became president, his prestige equaled, if not surpassed, that of Calles. The odium of his rebellion in 1923 diminished his reputation, but De la Huerta's loss was Mexico's gain. If the rebels had won, Mexico would have reverted to the status of 1914-1915 with the country divided again among warring factions. During his years of exile following the rebellion, his former friends, Obregón and Calles, created a government that could reconcile factionalism. De la Huerta made his contribution; it was not a negligible offering, but overshadowed by his partners, the Sonora giants, he truly became the forgotten man of the Sonora Triumvirate.

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